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TRACTS

IN CONTROVERSY WITH DR PRIESTLEY,

UPON THE HISTORICAL QUESTION, OF THE BELIEF OF

THE FIRST AGES, IN

OUR LORD'S DIVINITY.

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN THE YEARS 1783, 1784, & 1786,

AFTERWARDS REVISED AND AUGMENTED, WITH A LARGE ADDITION

OF NOTES AND SUPPLEMENTAL DISQUISITIONS,

BY THE AUTHOR,

SAMUEL, LORD BISHOP OF ST ASAPH.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

AN APPENDIX

By The Rev. HENEAGE HORSLEY, A. M.

PREBENDARY OF ST ASAPH, AND LATE STUDENT OF CHRIST'S CHURCH, OXON.

FIRST AMERICAN EDITION.

Αγνοιας γαρ μεγα τι μοι δοκω και χαλεπον αφωρισμενον οραν ειδος, πασι τοις αλλοις αυλης ανλιςαθμον μερεσι— Το μη καλειδολα τι, δοκειν ειδεναι δι ὁ κινδυνευει πανλα, ὁσα διανοια σφαλλομεθα, γιγνεσθαι πασι.....PLATO IN SOPHISTA.

BURLINGTON, N. J.

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY D. ALLINSON.

1821.

TO

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS

THE

PRINCE REGENT.

Sir,

THE remembrance of the attention and regard with which Your Royal Highness condescended to honour, during the latter years of his life, the Author of the following Tracts, first suggested to my mind the wish of introducing, under the sanction of Your High Patronage, the present edition of them to the publick.

This wish received additional strength from the reflection, that the republication of the Tracts, being intended as an antidote to the dissemination of false doctrine, the success of the design would be greatly promoted, were the work to

appear under the immediate auspices of Him, whom the Church of England looks upon as her legitimate Protector.

The ready and condescending manner, in which Your Royal Highness hath been graciously pleased to accede to the petition expressive of my wish, affords to the Church of England, at a crisis, when "those who hate her wrongfully are many in number and mighty" the high consolation, that she finds in You what she hath ever found in your Illustrious Father, not merely a nominal, but a real Defender of her Faith—while the personal honour conferred upon myself, and the expressions of regard with which Your Royal Highness has been pleased to speak of the memory of the late Bishop of St. Asaph, must ever be remembered with a sense of the deepest gratitude, and with feelings of unfeigned loyalty and zealous attachment to Your Royal Person, by

His Majesty's,
and your Royal Highness's
faithful Subject and Servant,
HENEAGE HORSLEY.

Dundee,
20th March, 1812.

THE

EDITOR'S

PREFACE.

IN the interval, between the time of Dr. Priestley's emigration to America and the death of Bishop Horsley, the exertions of the Unitarians appear to have lost much of their wonted activity. "The patriarch of the sect (*strange result of victory*) had fled; and the oracles and orators of Birmingham and Essex-Street were dumb; or if they spoke, spoke only to be disregarded."* No sooner, however, had happened the melancholy event which deprived the church of England of one of her most able champions, and, at the same time, released the Unitarians from the fears which they had justly entertained of their indefatigable opponent, than the party again ventured forth from their hiding places. The columns of the daily papers, were once more filled with their speeches at publick meetings, and the press again groaned under their pamphlets. At a meeting of the friends to the Unitarian fund, held at the London Tavern, immediately after the rejection of Lord Sidmouth's bill in 1811, one orator insisted upon the necessity of diffusing the *advantages* of the Unitarian system among the poor; another suggested the propriety of instituting an academy for students between 18 and 25 years of age; and a third, to raise the spirits of the party to

* See the Bishop of Rochester's Charge to the Clergy of his Diocese in the year 1800.

the highest pitch of hope, did not scruple to declare, that so far from Socinianism not becoming the religion of the people, he expected to live to see the day, when, by means of missions among them, and through the endeavours of the Socinian's friend, Mr. JOSEPH LANCASTER, Roman Catholicks would become good Unitarians.* Glorious æra, when all errors in faith shall be for ever done away and abolished, by the joint exertions of Socinian Missionaries, and Mr. JOSEPH LANCASTER!

His amor unus erat, pariterque in bella ruebant.

To give reality to such delightful hopes, the activity and zeal of the writers of the party, corresponded with the vaunting language of their orators. A bold endeavour to overturn the faith of the Christian world, was first made, by the publication of an *improved* version of the New Testament, with a *corrected* text, and notes critical and explanatory; in which every text relative to the Divinity of our Lord, is either expunged as a Trinitarian interpolation, or its genuine sense frittered away by some allegorical or figurative interpretation. This daring attempt, was quickly followed up by a work on THE SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE CONCERNING THE PERSON OF CHRIST, the author of which introduces himself to the notice of the publick in the *attractive*, but in the present instance, *masquerade* dress of a *calm* inquirer; and to this *calm* inquiry he affixes, what he presumes to call, a *review* of the controversy between Dr. Horsley and Dr. Priestly.

Of that controversy, the part of which Bishop Horsley was the author, has long been out of print; and the CALM INQUIRER, aware of this fact, has not scrupled to pervert the Bishop's reasoning, by partial quotations and prudent omissions;

* See the Morning Chronicle for the 6th of June 1811.

presuming, perhaps, on the scarcity of the book, that he might escape detection, whilst he should *thus* destroy the authority of the greatest modern champion of the Catholick faith!

Under these circumstances, the Editor was strongly urged by several of the clergy of the church of England, as well as by many, both of the established and of the Episcopal church in the country in which he now resides, to reprint the Bishop's Tracts. With such a request he thought it his duty to comply, and he sent an intimation of his intention to carry the work immediately to press, to the British Critic for October, 1811. At the time when he made that communication, he had by him only copies of the Tracts as they were published in separate pamphlets in the years 1783, 1784, and 1786. In each of these pamphlets, and in the Editor's copy of Dr. Priestley's part of the controversy, he found numerous marginal notes in the Bishop's hand writing; and this led him, somewhat too hastily he confesses, to state that he was in possession of new matter of the Bishop's, and to promise the publication of it. But when he came to compare these marginal notes with the copy of the Tracts published by the Bishop himself in the year 1789, he found that the greater part of them were already embodied in that edition, and that in the substance of what remained, he was completely anticipated by Mr. Edward Nares, Dr. Laurence, and Mr. Rennel, in their able remarks on the Unitarian version of the New Testament.

When offering the present edition of the Tracts to the publick, the Editor found himself called upon, by the most imperious sense of duty. to vindicate the character of the author of them, from the foul aspersions cast upon it by an unfair and ungenerous adversary. That the task might have fallen into abler hands, no one is more ready to admit than the Editor himself: but moderate abilities are sufficient, to vindicate truth against error and palpable misrepresentation;

and therefore he trusts, that the vindication in the Appendix will be found complete.

When the reader shall have become acquainted with the arts of controversy, which the *calm* inquirer has employed to make "the worse appear the better argument," and shall have read the contemptuous abuse he has heaped upon the head of Bishop Horsley; when the object of that abuse, to use the Bishop's emphatick words, was gone "to those unseen abodes, where the din of controversy and the din of war are equally unheard," he will perhaps think that he has discovered ANOTHER PERSON to whom the terms of reproach, which in the heat of debate fell from the pen of one of the original disputants, may now with greater propriety be applied, A FALSIFIER OF HISTORY, and A DEFAMER OF THE CHARACTER OF THE DEAD!

PREFACE.

A GENERAL view of the controversy between Dr. Priestley and the Author of the tracts of which the ensuing volume is composed, may not be unacceptable to such of its readers, who, for want of leisure or of opportunity, or perhaps of curiosity, to peruse the pieces on either side, as they were first successively published in separate pamphlets, may be supposed to be as yet unacquainted with the rise and progress, and with the present state of the dispute.

In the year 1782, an open and vehement attack was made by Dr. Priestley, upon the creeds and the established discipline of every church in Christendom, in a work in two volumes octavo, entitled, *A History of the Corruptions of Christianity.* At the head of these, the author placed both the Catholick doctrine of our Lord's Divinity, and the Arian notion of his pre-existence in a nature far superior to the human, representing the Socinian doctrine of his mere humanity as the unanimous faith of the first Christians. It seemed that the most effectual preservative against the intended mischief would be, to destroy the writer's credit and the authority of his name,

which the fame of certain lucky discoveries in the prosecution of physical experiments had set high in popular esteem, by proof of his incompetency in every branch of literature connected with his present subject, of which the work itself afforded evident specimens in great abundance. For this declared purpose, a review of the imperfections of his work, in the first part relating to our Lord's divinity, was made the subject of a Charge delivered to the Clergy of the Archdeaconry of St. Alban's the spring next following Dr. Priestley's publication. The specimens alleged, of the imperfections of the work and the incompetency of its author, may be reduced to six general classes.—Instances of reasoning in a circle; instances of quotations misapplied through ignorance of the writer's subject; instances of testimonies perverted by artful and forced constructions; instances of passages in the Greek fathers misinterpreted through ignorance of the Greek language; instances of passages misinterpreted, through the same ignorance, driven further out of the way by an ignorance of the Platonick philosophy; instances of ignorance of the phraseology of the earliest ecclesiastical writers. This discourse was received by the venerable body to which it was addressed, with marks of favour and approbation, ever to be remembered by its author with pride and satisfaction. At their request, it was given with considerable enlargement to the publick. It is the first tract in the present collection. The first publication of this discourse, gave no small alarm to the well-wishers and admirers of Dr. Priestley's doctrines. Dr. Priestley however kept up the spirits of his party, by promising an early and satisfactory answer.

> Per damna, per cædes, ab ipso
> Ducit opes animumque ferro——

was his vaunting language. He predicted that he should rise more illustrious from his supposed defeat; he promised to strengthen the evidence of his favourite opinion by the very objections that had been raised against it; he seemed to

flatter himself, that he should find a new convert in his antagonist himself; and his new performance had scarcely made its appearance, when he had the ridiculous vanity to boast, even in print, of the shame and remorse with which he was confident his adversary must be penetrated. A controversy that was in the meanwhile going on upon the same subject, between Dr. Priestley and the Rev. Mr. Samuel Badcock, the author of a learned critique upon the first part of Dr. Priestley's history, inserted in the Monthly Review for the month of June 1783, gave Dr. Priestley the occasion of raising these expectations in the public. It was late in the autumn of the same year (1783) when the work which was to effect these wonders, appeared in the form of *Letters to Dr. Horsley*. These Letters gave occasion to the tract which is the second in this collection, entitled, *Letters from the Archdeacon of St. Alban's in Reply to Dr. Priestley*, which was first published in the summer of the year 1784. Dr. Priestley, in his Letters, expressed a great desire to draw his adversary into a tedious controversy on the main question,—the article of our Lord's Divinity. His adversary knowing that question to have been long since exhausted, and that nothing new was to be said on either side, chose in his *Letters in Reply* to adhere closely to *his own* main question. He defended his former argument, and he collected new specimens from Dr. Priestley's new publication, of his utter inability to throw light upon the subject. Thus a useless and endless contention upon the main question was avoided; but many discussions necessarily arose upon secondary points more or less connected with it. The authority of the writings that go under the name of the apostolical fathers—the rise of the two sects of the Nazarenes and the Ebionites—the difference between the two—and the difference of both from the orthodox Hebrew Christians—these the learned reader will probably esteem the most interesting parts of the whole controversy; as, on the other hand, he will certainly judge the long dispute, whether the word *Jews* means Jews, on Dr. Priestley's part at least, to be the most frivolous. In these Letters

in Reply, Dr. Priestley's antagonist declared himself resolved, to give no answer to any thing that Dr. Priestley might find to say further upon the subject. A declaration, in which at the time he was much in earnest.

Dr. Priestley, mortified to find that his Letters had failed of the expected success; that his antagonist, touched with no shame, with no remorse, remained unshaken in his opinion; and that the authority of his own opinion was still set at nought, his learning disallowed, his ingenuity in argument impeached; and what was least to be born,—finding that a haughty churchman ventured incidentally to avow his sentiments of the Divine commission of the Episcopal ministry, and presumed to question the authority of those teachers, who usurp the preacher's office without any better warrant than their own opinion of their own sufficiency,—lost all temper. A second set of *Letters to the Archdeacon of St. Alban's* appeared in the autumn of the year 1784, in which all profession of personal regard and civility was laid aside. The charge of insufficiency in the subject was warmly retorted, and the incorrigible dignitary was taxed with manifest misrepresentation of his adversary's argument; with injustice to the character of Origen, whose veracity he had called in question; and with the grossest falsification of ancient history. He was stigmatized, in short, in terms, as *a falsifier of history, and a defamer of the character of the dead.*

Under all this reproach, he continued silent almost eighteen months: the character of Origen and an intricate question of ancient history, upon which the charge of direct falsification had been advanced against him, were indeed the only points on which he felt the least desire to reply. *A Sermon on the Incarnation* preached in his parish church of St. Mary Newington, in Surrey, upon the feast of the nativity, in the year 1785, which is the third tract in this collection, was the prelude to a renewal of the contest upon his side, and was followed early in the ensuing spring by his *Remarks on Dr.*

Priestley's Second Letters to the Archdeacon of St. Alban's, with Proofs of certain facts asserted by the Archdeacon. This tract is the fourth in order in this volume. It consists of two parts. The first is a collection of new specimens of Dr. Priestley's temerity in assertion. The second defends the attack upon the character of Origen, and proves the existence of a body of Hebrew Christians at Ælia, after the time of Adrian,—the fact upon which the author's good faith had been so loudly arraigned. It also contains confirmation of another fact which had been incidentally mentioned,—the decline of Calvinism among our English dissenters, and a chapter on the general spirit of Dr. Priestley's controversial writings. With this publication, he again promised himself that the controversy on his part would be closed. But having at last, yielded with reluctance to the solicitations of his friends to republish these four tracts in the present form, he hath taken this occasion to give Dr. Priestley's Letters a second perusal; and to many things which he had before passed unnoticed, he hath now replied, partly in notes occasionally interspersed in the former tracts, and where the matter, arising from any particular question, hath turned out to be more than could be conveniently comprised within the compass of a note, in Supplemental Disquisitions of considerable length. The Remarks upon Dr. Priestley's Second Letters, produced a *third* set of *Letters from Dr. Priestley*, upon the two questions of Origen's veracity and the orthodox Hebrews of the church of Ælia. These too are answered, partly in notes interspersed in the Remarks, and partly in the two last Supplemental Disquisitions, which in all are six in number. It is conceived, that nothing of any consequence in Dr. Priestley's three sets of Letters now remains unanswered. The author indeed is well aware, that Dr. Priestley will charge him with one capital omission.— That he hath taken no notice of any thing that may be contained, relating to the various points of this controversy, in Dr. Priestley's *History of Early Opinions concerning Christ;* that large work, in four volumes, the result of a *whole two-*

years study of the writers of antiquity, which, as it hath been published since Dr. Priestley's last Letters, may be supposed to contain better arguments, or at least his old arguments in a better form. The only apology to be made is, a simple declaration of the truth. Not conceiving himself obliged to engage in the insipid task of reading so long a book, without better hope of information from it than his past experience of the writer's knowledge on the subject gives, Dr. Priestley's adversary is as ignorant of the contents of that work, as he could have been had it never been published. It is reported indeed, that the work, whatever may be its merits, hath a very slow sale. Of consequence, it hath found but few readers. The antagonist of Dr. Priestley, were he better acquainted with its contents, would still disdain to do the office of the midwife for this laborious birth. He would not, by an unnecessary and unseasonable opposition to neglected arguments, be the instrument of drawing four volumes, fraught as the very title imports, with pernicious heretical theology, from the obscurity in which they may innocently rot in the Printer's warehouse.

A

CHARGE

TO THE

CLERGY

OF THE

ARCHDEACONRY OF ST. ALBAN'S.

A

CHARGE,

&c.

MY REVEREND BRETHREN,

THE business of the Christian priesthood, like that of every secular occupation, consisting in two branches, the speculative and the practical; if any of us, by a particular blessing of Providence attending our temporal fortunes, are released from the necessity, to which the greater part submit, of a severe and constant toil in the practical branch of the profession, as the labour by which they have to earn their daily bread; it seems to be our particular duty to consecrate the leisure we enjoy, if I may borrow an expression from the profane sciences, to the theory of religion. And in the present state of religious learning in this country, it should seem, that the cultivation of that branch of it which is called sacred criticism, and particularly the elucidation of the text of the Old Testament, by a diligent use of the materials which the unwearied industry of a learned critick, supported by the munificence of the best of Princes, hath supplied; is the study in which, of all others, our talents and our industry might be best employed. It is, however, to be remembered, that the writings of the

Old Testament are only of a secondary importance; for the evidence which they afford of the truth of our Lord's pretensions, and for the light which they throw upon the doctrines of the gospel, which is indeed so great, that an inattention to these more ancient parts of the code of revelation, is likely to be one principal cause of the scepticism which unhappily prevails among our modern sectaries, concerning the original dignity of the Redeemer's nature, and the expiatory virtue of his sufferings. But in whatever degree the Jewish Scriptures may be useful for the general confirmation of Christianity; it is from their relation to the gospel, to which, we have been told by the highest authority, the Mosaick dispensation was but a prelude or preparative, that they derive the whole of the importance which they yet retain. A profound and critical acquaintance with them, is useful only, as means conducive to an end: and in this, as in other cases, every solid advantage will be lost, that might be reaped from the improvement of the means, if, in the too assiduous pursuit of these, we lose sight of the end to which they should be made subservient. The theology of the Christian revelation, is the great object to which every other branch of sacred literature is naturally subordinate. To extract it from the writings of the apostles and evangelists, connected with the earlier revelations; to assert and defend their genuine doctrine; to preserve it entire; and to maintain it in its native purity, unadulterated by the additions of superstition, undebased and undiminished by the refinements of philosophy: this is the great business to which those of us, who feel themselves at ease and in affluence, and masters of the leisure which affluence affords, should consider their talents and their studies to be solemnly devoted.

2. My Reverend Brethren, I would be understood to speak with sentiments of respect, of those whom I shall take the liberty to call the labouring part of the parochial clergy: of those whose lives are spent in a constant attendance on the publick ceremonies of external worship, or in the charitable and necessary business of instructing the people of the lower ranks, in the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. Of these venerable men, of their godly labours, and honourable occupations, I would be understood to speak with reverence and respect. Of all the departments of the sacred office, the business of that which it is their lot to fill, is perhaps the most immediately conducive to general edification: and for the zeal and ability with which it is discharged by them, they are justly entitled to the highest degrees of veneration and esteem. It is matter of concern and grief to every serious Christian, that their rewards in this life should but seldom correspond, in any fair proportion, with the worth of their characters, and the importance of their services. Thanks be to Him, of whom the whole family is named, their hope is full of glory. It is felt, I am persuaded, by themselves, as the heaviest inconvenience of their present situation, that their employment, useful and honourable as it must ever be confessed to be, partakes in some degree of the nature of a worldly business; requiring a labour of the body, and a distracting intercourse with the world, which leave little opportunity for private study and solitary meditation. In circumstances so unfriendly to literary improvement, it redounds highly to their praise that they are so eminently well qualified, as they generally approve themselves to be, to discharge the plain duty of Catechists, with credit to themselves, and advantage to

the church of God. To deliver the doctrine of the gospel in that plain and general way, which, if it were to meet with no opposition from the disputers of the world, might be sufficient to give it its full effect upon the heart of the hearer. But occasions will from time to time arise, when the truth must be not only taught, but defended. The stubborn infidel will raise objections against the first principles of our faith: and objections must be answered. The restless spirit of scepticism will suggest difficulties in the system, and create doubts about the particulars of the Christian doctrine: difficulties must be removed, and doubts must be satisfied. But above all, the scruples must be composed, which the refinements of a false philosophy, patronized as they are in the present age, by men no less amiable for the general purity of their manners, than distinguished by their scientifick attainments, will be too apt to raise in the minds of the weaker brethren. And this is the service to which they, whom the indulgence of Providence hath released from the more laborious offices of the priesthood, stand peculiarly engaged. To them, their more occupied brethren have a right to look up, in these emergencies, for support and succour in the common cause. It is for them to stand forth the champions of the common faith, and the advocates of their order. It is for them to wipe off the aspersions injuriously cast upon the sons of the establishment, as uninformed in the true grounds of the doctrine which they teach, or insincere in the belief of it. To this duty they are indispensibly obliged, by their providential exemption from work of a harder kind. It is the proper business of the station which is allotted them in Christ's household, and deep will be their shame, and insupportable their punishment, if, in the great day

of reckoning it should appear, that they have received the wages of a service which hath never been performed.

3. You will easily conjecture, that what has led me into these reflections is, the extraordinary attempt which hath been lately made, to unsettle the faith, and to break up the constitution of every ecclesiastical establishment in Christendom. Such is the avowed object of a recent publication, which bears the title of "A History of the Corruptions of Christianity;" among which the Catholick doctrine of the Trinity, in the author's opinion, holds a principal place. With what success he hath attacked this fundamental article, and how far he hath been able to invalidate the argument from early and uniform tradition, this reverend assembly will be competent to judge, from the brief view which shall be laid before them, of the account which he attempts to give of the rise and progress of the doctrine in the three first ages, accompanied with specimens of the proofs by which his pretended history, in this part of it, is supported.

I.

1. The opinion which he maintains, is in general the same which was first, I think, propagated in the last century by Daniel Zuicker, a Prussian physician of the Socinian persuasion; and, upon the authority of that writer, hath been current ever since among the Unitarians of this country. "That the doctrine of the Trinity, in the form in which it is now maintained, is of no greater antiquity than the Nicene council: that it is the result of a gradual corruption of the doctrine of the gospel, which took its rise in an opinion first advanced in the second century, by certain converts from the Platonick school; who, expounding the beginning of St John's gospel by the Platonick doctrine of the Logos, ascribed a sort of

secondary divinity to our Saviour, affirming that he was no other than the second principle of the Platonick Triad, who had assumed a human body to converse with man: that before this innovation, of which Justin Martyr is made the author, the faith of the whole Christian church, but particularly of the church of Jerusalem, was simply and strictly Unitarian. The immediate disciples of the apostles conceived our Saviour to be a man, whose existence commenced in the womb of the Virgin; and they thought him in no respect the object of worship. The next succeeding race worshiped him indeed, but they had however no higher notions of his divinity, than those which were maintained by the followers of Arius in the fourth century." In short, the first race of Christians, in Dr Priestly's opinion, were Unitarians in the strictest sense of the word: the second, Arians.* As Dr Priestley follows Zuicker in these extravagant assertions, so the arguments by which he would support them, are in all essential points the same which were alleged to the same purpose, either by that writer, or by Simon Episcopius. Episcopius, though himself no Socinian, very indiscreetly concurred with the Socinians of his time in maintaining, that the opinion of the mere humanity of Christ, had prevailed very generally in the first ages, and was never deemed heretical by the fathers of the orthodox persuasion; at least not in such degree, as to exclude from the communion of the church. The opinion, I believe, had its rise in no worse principle than the charitable temper of the man, and his just

* See this brief statement of Dr Priestley's opinion defended against his objections to it, in the 15th of my Letters in Reply.

abhorrence of the spirit of persecution, with which Christians, of every denomination, were in his time much infected: which is indeed itself, of all heresies, by far the most malignant, being that most opposite to the general philanthropy, which is the root of all social virtue, and the highest ornament of the Christian profession. Episcopius wished, as every good man must wish, to see a general toleration established; which he thought could not be more effectually recommended, than by the example of the harmony which subsisted among Christians in the earliest ages. The force of his example, he would naturally think improved, in proportion as the idea of the harmony was heightened, as the controversies of the first Christians were magnified and multiplied. These sentiments, inclined him to credit as historians the same writers, whom, as divines, he held in little estimation. He gave easy credit to Unitarian writers, when they represented the differences of opinion in the early churches, as much greater than ever really obtained; and the tenderness for sectaries, as more than was ever practised; and while he opposed their doctrine, he vouched their story. The purposes of charity had been better served, without injury to the cause of truth, had the talents of this able writer been employed, to set the doctrine of universal toleration on its only firm and proper basis: to show, that although in dubious points of doctrine, the judgment of antiquity, wherever it is clear, must be allowed to be decisive; yet the just severity of the primitive church towards the refractory hereticks, whose visionary doctrines, joined with their contempt of apostolick authority, disgraced the rising community, and obstructed the propagation of the truth; constitutes no example for the control of fair inquiry, or for the punishment of

mere speculative heresy in these latter times; by any harsher means than the necessary exclusion of dissenters from the honours and emoluments of national establishments. Had the opinion which he chose to adopt been true, Simon Episcopius, with his scanty knowledge of ecclesiastical antiquities, was but ill qualified to maintain it. False and groundless as it was, his natural acuteness enabled him to furnish the Socinians of his time, whose cause in the doctrinal part he little thought to serve, with the best arguments that have ever been produced on the Unitarian side of the question. Our modern historian, in support of his imaginary progress of opinions from the Unitarian doctrine to the Nicene faith, hath produced few, if any arguments, which make directly for his purpose, but what are to be found in the writings either of Zuicker or Episcopius. Nor is a single argument to be found in the writings either of Zuicker or Episcopius, which is not unanswerably confuted by our learned Dr George Bull, afterwards Lord Bishop of St David's, in three celebrated treatises, which deserve the particular attention of every one, who would take upon him to be either a teacher or an historian of the Christian faith. The first, "A Defence of the Nicene faith;" the second, "The Judgment of the Catholick church, in the first ages, concerning the necessity of believing that our Lord Jesus Christ is very God;" the third, "The Primitive and Apostolical tradition concerning the true Divinity of Jesus Christ."

2. It seems very extraordinary, that any one should presume to revive the defeated arguments of Zuicker and Episcopius, without attempting to make them good against the objections of a writer of Dr Bull's eminence. Nor is it easy to conceive, what apology can be made, for what

should seem so gross an insult on the learning and discernment of the age; unless it be, that Dr. Priestley imagines, that although he hath abstained from a particular discussion of Dr. Bull's arguments, he hath in effect answered them, by the new light which he persuades himself he has thrown upon the subject: that by the evidence which he thinks he hath brought of the truth of his own narrative, in every branch of it, he supposes that he hath virtually replied to all objections: that he hath confirmed the assumptions from which Zuicker and Episcopius reasoned, which Dr. Bull pretended to deny: and that, by confirming their assumptions, he hath made good their arguments, although he may have taken no notice of their learned antagonist. What new illustrations the subject hath received from Dr. Priestley's labours, will best appear from specimens of the arguments by which he would support his three principal assumptions: namely, that the first Christians were Unitarians in the strictest sense of the word; that the deity of Christ was first taught by a Platonizing sect; and that the doctrine which they introduced, was the very same for which, in a later age, Arius was condemned. If his proof of these fundamental propositions should be found to rest upon precarious assumptions, perverted history, misconstrued and misapplied quotations; if his facts should appear to be confuted by his own authorities, and his conclusions to be defeated by his own arguments; if the resemblance between the Christian and the Platonick Trinity, should appear to be no mark of corruption in the prevailing opinions; the Catholick faith, which hath heretofore sustained so many rude assaults, will hardly find its mortal wound in the stroke which Dr. Priestley imagines he hath inflicted.

3. The first argument which is produced in support of the first assertion, "that the faith of the first Christians was simply Unitarian," is built upon an assumption, which, could it be proved to be true, would indeed render the conclusion obvious and inevitable: "That the doctrine of our Lord's mere humanity, is the clear doctrine of the Scriptures, and that the apostles never taught any other."* It will easily be granted, that the apostles never taught the contrary of any doctrine that is clearly delivered in their writings; and that the faith of the first converts, was a belief of neither more nor less than the apostles taught. So that the sense of the Scriptures in any article being once clearly ascertained, the argument from the clear confessed sense of Scripture to the preaching of the apostles, and from the preaching of the apostles to the primitive faith, will be firm and valid. But the professed object of our learned adversary's undertaking, requires an argument, that should go the contrary way:—from the primitive faith to the sense of the Scriptures. It is the professed object of his undertaking, to exhibit a view of the gradual changes of opinions, in order to ascertain the faith of the first ages: and he would ascertain the faith of the first ages, in order to settle the sense of the Scriptures in disputed points. He is therefore not at liberty, to assume any sense of the Scriptures, which, because it is his own, he may be pleased to call the clear sense, for a proof that the original faith was such, as would confirm the sense he wishes to establish. His sense of the Scriptures, not being acknowledged by the majority of the Chris-

* History of Corruptions, vol. i. p. 6.

tian church, whatever may be his own judgment of its clearness, it can only pass for a particular interpretation. When this particular interpretation is alleged, in proof that the original faith of the church of Jerusalem was such as might justify that interpretation; the middle term of the argument is no otherwise confirmed, than by an assumption of the principal matter in debate: and so long as the sixth page of the first volume of Dr Priestley's history shall be extant, the masters of the dialectick art, will be at no loss for an example of the circulating syllogism. To Dr Priestley, it may be very clear, that when St John, speaking of the Logos, of which he had already affirmed, that it was in the beginning, says, "This person" (for that is the natural force of the Greek pronoun ουτος*) "This person was in the beginning with God; all things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made:" it may be very clear to Dr Priestley, that St John, speaking of the Logos as of a person who had been from the beginning, and had done these great things; means to affirm that the Logos is no person; nor is, otherwise than in a figurative sense, to be called an agent in any business: that he means to contradict those, who held that the Logos was any thing more than an attribute of the Divine mind; to silence them; to extinguish their profane innovation, by his definitive sentence upon the question: and that when he speaks of eternity, as belonging to the Logos as a person, it is, that this was the most explicit way, in which he could give the Christian church to understand, that eternity is only accidental to the Logos, the substance to

* See the third of my Letters in Reply, and the Appendix to the Letters, No. 2.

which it properly belongs, being that mind of which the Logos itself is only another attribute.* It may be very clear to Dr Priestley's apprehension, that when St Paul affirms of Christ, that he is the "image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature, by whom all things were created," and explains in what extent the words "all things" are to be understood, by an enumeration of the constituent parts, and governing powers of the universe; "things in heaven and things in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him, and he is before all things, and by him all things consist;"† it may be very clear to Dr Priestley, that St Paul, in these expressions, would be understood to assert, that Christ was nothing more than a man, and was no otherwise the creator of any thing, than as he was the founder of the Christian church. All this may be very clear to Dr Priestley's apprehension; and equal to the clearness of the apprehension, which he imagines he enjoys, that this was the doctrine of the apostles, will be the confidence of his persuasion, that it was also the faith of their first converts. But to others, who have not the sagacity to discern, that the true meaning of an inspired writer must be the reverse of the natural and obvious sense of the expressions which he employs, the force of the conclusion, that the primitive Christians could not believe our Lord to be more than a mere man, because the apostles had told them he was the Creator of the universe, will be little understood.

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* Hist. of Corrup. vol. i. p. 10, 12.

† Coloss. i. 15, 17.

4. Another argument is built upon a pretended silence of St John, about the error of those who maintained the mere humanity of Christ,* in his first epistle: in which he is supposed to censure those, who believed Christ to be a man only in appearance, in the severest manner; but upon those who believed him to be nothing more than man, the apostle, as he is understood by Dr Priestley, passes no censure. From which it is to be concluded, that the latter opinion is no error, but the very truth of the gospel.

5. But here the question is, whether the opinion of Christ's mere humanity is really passed over by St John, as Dr Priestley supposes, uncensured and unnoticed. This question will be differently resolved, according as different interpretations of the apostle's expressions are adopted. This argument, therefore, is of the same complexion with the former, and labours under the same defect. A particular sense of the epistle is alleged, in proof of a pretended fact; which fact must itself support the interpretation. "Every spirit," says St John, "which confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God."† "That is," says Dr Priestley, "every spirit is of God, that confesses that Jesus Christ is truly a man."‡ But it should seem, that the proposition that he was truly a man, if he was nothing more than man, is very awkwardly and unnaturally expressed by the phrase of his "coming in the flesh:" for in what other way was it possible for a mere man to come? The turn of the expression seems to lead to the notion of a

* Hist. of Corrup. vol. i. p. 10, 13; and vol. ii. p. 485.
† 1 John iv. 2.
‡ Hist. of Corrup. vol. i. p. 10.

being, who had his choice of different ways of coming; a notion which is implied in other passages of holy writ, and is explicitly expressed in a book little inferior in authority to the canonical writings; in the first epistle of Clemens Romanus; in a passage of that epistle which Dr Priestley, somewhat unfortunately for his cause, hath chosen for the basis of an argument of that holy father's heterodoxy. "The sceptre of the majesty of God," says Clemens, "our Lord Jesus Christ, came not in the pomp of pride and arrogance, *although he had it in his power.*"* Clemens, it seems, conceived, that the manner of coming, was in the power and choice of the person who was to come. St John's expressions evidently lead to the same notion. It should seem, therefore, that St John's assertions, concerning the spirits that maintain or deny that Jesus is come in the flesh, that the one are of God, and the other of antichrist, were levelled, not singly at the heresy of the *Docetæ*, as Dr Priestley imagines, but equally at that and at another branch of the Gnostick heresy, which divided Jesus Christ into two persons: Jesus, who was supposed to be a mere man, the son of Mary by her husband Joseph; and the Christ, a divine being, who was considered as the genius, or tutelary angel of the man; not however so united with the man, as to constitute one person, or to partake of the man's sufferings. The first epistle of St John, asserts the doctrine of a true and proper incarnation, in opposition to the extravagancies of both these sects. The apostle makes the acknowledgment of the incarnation, in which both an antecedent divinity and an assumed

* Chap. xvi.

humanity are implied, the criterion by which the true teachers are to be distinguished from the false. And in the positive assertion of the incarnation, and the express censure of the opposite doctrine as antichristian, he reprobates the notion of Christ's mere humanity, in the only sense in which we have any certain evidence that he lived to see it maintained. It appears, therefore, that to confess that "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh,"* and to affirm that Jesus Christ is truly a man, are propositions not perfectly equivalent. Dr Priestley indeed hath shown himself very sensible of the difference. He would not otherwise have found it necessary, for the improvement of his argument, in reciting the third verse of the fourth chapter of St John's first epistle, to change the expressions which he found in the publick translation, for others which correspond far less exactly with the Greek text. For the words "Jesus Christ is come *in* the flesh," Dr Priestley substitutes these, "Jesus Christ is come *of* the flesh."† That he is come *in* the flesh, and that he is come *of* the flesh, are two very distinct propositions. The one affirms an incarnation; the other a mortal extraction. The first is St John's assertion; the second is Dr Priestley's. Perhaps Dr Priestley hath discovered of St John as of St Paul, that his reasoning is sometimes inconclusive,‡ and his language inaccurate: and he might think it no unwarrantable liberty to correct an expression, which, as not perfectly corresponding with his own system, he could not en-

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* 1 John iv. 2. Ιησουν Χριστον εν σαρκι εληλυθοτα.

† Hist. of Corrup. vol. i. p. 10. line 15.

‡ "——— I think I have shown that the apostle Paul often reasons inconclusively." Dr. P's. Hist. of Corrup. vol. ii. p. 379.

tirely approve. It would have been but fair to advertise his readers of so capital an emendation; an emendation for which no support is to be found in the Greek text, nor even in the varieties of any manuscripts. We are informed indeed by Socrates the historian,* (and his testimony is confirmed by the Latin of the vulgate,) of a very considerable variety of some of the ancient manuscripts. But it is such as only serves to prove, that the principal object of this epistle of St John, was understood in the primitive church, to be the confutation of the Cerinthian Gnosticks; the sect which divided Christ into two persons, of which they made Jesus a mere man; differing in this, essentially from the *Docetæ*, who made the body of the man Jesus a mere phantom.

6. And this view of St John's epistle, receives a further confirmation from the genuine epistles of Ignatius. In these, the error of the *Docetæ*, which Dr Priestley supposes to be the sole object of St John's epistle, is indeed particularly censured. But lest, in asserting the truth of our Lord's humanity, he should be understood to support the opinion of his *mere* humanity, the holy Father hardly ever mentions Christ, without introducing some explicit assertion of his Divinity, or without joining with the name of Christ, some epithet in which it is implied.

7. The mention of Ignatius having occurred, it were unpardonable not to suggest to the recollection of this learned assembly, one passage in particular in the epistle to the Magnesians, in which the eternal existence of the Word, as a distinct person from the Father, is asserted

* Lib. vii. c. 32.

in terms, which, though highly figurative, are perfectly unequivocal: There is one God, who hath manifested himself through Jesus Christ his Son, who is his eternal Word, who came not forth from silence."* The name of the Logos, led the early fathers to conceive the generation of the Son as an utterance; or, at least, to speak of it under that figure; as on the contrary, the hereticks, who denied the eternity of the Son, described the period preceding his generation as a time of silence.† Under that figure, Ignatius speaks of the generation of the Son in this passage: and he affirms, that no period of silence had preceded the utterance of the eternal Word. Or, if it should seem more reasonable to suppose an allusion, in these expressions of Ignatius, to the *Sige* of the Gnosticks, the consort of their *Buthos*, upon whom the Æons were engendered; and to understand the holy father as maintaining the immediate connexion of the Father and the Son, unbroken by the intervention of any such intermediate intelligencies, as the impious theogony of the Gnosticks interposed; still the eternity of the Son is asserted. For the passage, in this view of it, amounts to this disjunctive proposition: "The Son's existence holds not of the Father's by any such remote relation as these fabulous genealogies describe; but he is the eternal Logos of the Paternal mind." According to either interpretation, the passage contains an evident assertion of the divinity of the Son of God. And this assertion being found in the writings of Ignatius, the

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* Εις Θεος εστιν ο φανερωσας εαυτον δια Ιησυ Χριστυ του υιυ αυτυ, ος εστιν αυτυ λογος αϊδιος, ουκ απο σιγης προελθων. Ing. ad. Magn. sec. 8.

† So Marcellus of Ancyra:—Ουδε γαρ της δημιουργιας απασης, ησυχια τις ην, ως φησι, εν τω Θεω τω Λογω ουσης. Euseb. contra Marcell. p. 39.

familiar friend and companion of the apostles, who suffered martyrdom so early as in the sixteenth year of the second century, and had been appointed to the bishoprick of Antioch full thirty years before; it is an unanswerable confutation of our author's confident assertions, that "we find nothing like divinity ascribed to Jesus Christ before Justin martyr,"* and "that all the early fathers speak of Christ, as not having existed always."†

8. We have seen the sort and fashion of the argument, which, in proof of his first assertion, Dr Priestley builds on holy writ. Let us take a view of those which he hath drawn from other writers.

9. One principal argument, "that the primitive church of Jerusalem was properly Unitarian," maintaining the simple humanity of Christ, is this;—"Athanasius himself was so far from denying it," says Dr Priestley, "that he endeavours to account for it, by saying,"—"that all the Jews were so firmly persuaded that their Messiah was to be nothing more than a man like themselves, that the apostles were obliged to use great caution in divulging the doctrine of the proper divinity of Christ."‡ The latter clause of the sentence, which contains what Athanasius is supposed to have said, is marked with inverted commas; which should seem to intimate, that it is an exact translation of some passage in the holy father's writings: and the lower margin of Dr Priestleys's book, refers to Athanasius's celebrated piece on the orthodoxy of his predecessor, Dionysius.

* Hist. of Corrup. vol. i. p. 32.
† Ibid. vol. i. p. 42.
‡ Hist. of Corrup. vol. i. p. 12.

Now in this piece upon the orthodoxy of Dionysius, Athanasius no where, I confess, denies that the primitive church of Jerasalem was Unitarian. Nor, on the other hand, do I recollect that Dr Priestley hath asserted it, in any part of his "History of Electricity." The truth is, that in either of these valuable works, the faith of the primitive church of Jerusalem never comes in question. In the defence of Dionysius, not a single passage is to be found, which may be fairly understood as a tacit confession, that the primitive faith of the church of Jerusalem was Unitarian: much less is there any attempt to account for its supposed heterodoxy. Athanasius says indeed of the Jews of the apostolick age, that is, of the unbelieving Jews, (for Athanasius is a writer who calls things by their names; and when he speaks of Jews, means not, as Dr Priestley would persuade us,* Jewish Christians, except when he sarcastically gives the Arians the name of Jews, as resembling the Jews, in his judgment, in an obstinate denial of the Lord who bought them; but otherwise, when he speaks his usual, plain, unfigured language, the unconverted Jews of the apostolick age are they, of whom he says,) that they had so little insight into the true meaning of the prophecies, as to look for nothing more than a MAN in the promised Messiah. He says, that this error of the Jews had been the means of spreading the like mistake among the Gentiles; meaning probably the proselytes of the Gate; who, acknowledging in some degree the divinity of the Jewish Scriptures, looked for the completion of the prophecies, and were

* Hist. of Corrup. vol ii. p. 436.

the first Gentiles to whom the preaching of the apostles was addressed. These Gentiles, with something of the Jewish faith, it may easily be supposed, had imbibed many of the Jewish errors; and among others, as Athanasius imagines, the expectation of a Messiah of mortal extraction. This general mistake, he says, made it necessary, that the apostles, in their first publick sermons, should insist largely on the miracles of our Saviour's life on earth, before they entered into a detail of the particulars of the gospel doctrine, or explained what sort of person the promised Messiah was to be, and Jesus was. For their doctrine upon that article was not likely to meet with credit, till their divine commission to teach it was acknowledged, and their Master's general claim to the character of the Messiah, whatever that might be, previously admitted. The example of the apostles' practice in this particular is alleged, to show what prudence requires of every preacher of the gospel; who must allow himself to be determined in the arrangement of his matter, the choice of his topicks, and the composition of his language, by the degree of previous knowledge, and the state of opinions, which may actually obtain among those to whom his instructions are addressed. What the ignorant will most easily apprehend, must be first taught: those points, which are supposed to be most generally misunderstood, must be most particularly explained: and the truth must be conveyed in that language, which may the most evidently show its disagreement with any false opinions, to which the hearer may be particularly addicted. Athanasius contends, that upon these principles Dionysius was to be justified, if he dwelt more on the topick of our Lord's humiliation, than on that of his divinity:

the Sabellian heresy being the error with which Dionysius was engaged. The consideration that the Son became man, afforded the most obvious proof that he was not the Father: and the Sabellians were to be convinced, that the Word was made flesh, gross, corruptible flesh, before they could be brought to acknowledge that he was God of God. Athanasius shows, that, in the controversy with these hereticks, Dionysius was inevitably led to the use of expressions, which the Arian party interpreted in their own favour; though Dionysius always disclaimed the sense, to which his words were wrested. He contends, that to tax Dionysius with a propensity to the Arian party, on account of these expressions, were no less unreasonable and injurious, than it would be to entertain the like suspicion of the apostles themselves; because they had found it necessary to persuade the Jews, that Jesus had been approved of God, by signs and wonders, as a man, before they could hope to persuade them, that he was so much more than man, that his being found in fashion as a man, was really the most extraordinary part of his history and character. It is in no other way than this, that Athanasius speaks of the apostles, as teaching the Jews the humanity of Christ. The holy father never speaks of any caution which they used in divulging the doctrine of his full divinity; unless an historian's distribution of the matter of his narrative, or a master's accommodation of his lessons to the previous attainments of his pupils, is to be called a caution of divulging, what, in the natural order of tradition, is to be the last disclosed. Was it ever said of Livy, that he relates the tragedy of Lucretia's death, from a caution of divulging the expulsion of the Tarquins? Of Porphyry,

that he treats of the five words, from a caution of divulging the doctrine of the Categories? The beginning of every story must be first told—The easiest part of every science must be first taught. Of the great ability and judgment, with which the apostles conducted the first preaching of the gospel; of their happy art in the perspicuous arrangement of their lofty argument; with what readiness they led their catechumens on, from the simplest principles to the highest mysteries; of this consummate ability of the apostles in the capacity of teachers, Athanasius speaks with due commendation. Their caution he never mentions. On the contrary, the rapid progress of their instruction, how they passed at once from the detail of our Lord's life on earth, to the mystery of his Godhead, is one principal branch of his encomium. I wish that Dr Priestley had produced the passage, in which he thinks the apostles are taxed with caution; and of which he certainly imagines (he would not otherwise have led his reader to imagine) he hath given an exact translation.*

10. Nearly allied to this argument from Athanasius's omissions to *deny*, is another from Epiphanius's omission to *assert*. "Epiphanius, in his account of the Nazarenes—makes no mention of any of them believing the divinity of Christ in any sense of the word."† It is granted. Epiphanius, in his account of these ancient hereticks,‡ makes indeed no mention, that they believed

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* See the passage produced and critically examined, in the fourth of Dr Priestley's first Letters to me, the eleventh of my Letters in reply, and the tenth of Dr Priestley's second Letters; and in my remarks upon Dr Priestley's second Letters,—Part II. chap. i. sec. 11.

† Hist. of Corrup. vol. i, p. 3.

‡ Hæres. 29.

the divinity of Christ in any sense of the word. But what is this *no-mention* which Epiphanius makes, and of what importance is it to our author's system? It is only that Epiphanius confesses, that he had no certain information, what the opinion of the Nazarenes might be upon this article. He had described them in general as a sect half Jew and half Christian: not Jews, because they had something of a belief in Christ: not Christians, because they lived in bondage to the ritual law. "But concerning Christ," he says, "I cannot say whether they think him a mere man; or affirm, as the truth is, that he was begotten of Mary by the Holy Ghost."* It is thus, and thus only, that Epiphanius *makes no mention* of the belief of the Nazarenes in Christ's divinity. But he equally makes no mention of their disbelief. And had it been Dr Priestley's point to prove, that the Nazarenes held the Nicene faith upon the subject of the Trinity, he might have alleged, with equal fairness and propriety, Epiphanius's no-mention of their heterodoxy.

11. Indeed, that they were believers in our Lord's divinity, were the fairer conclusion from the neutrality of Epiphanius's evidence. It was little the temper of the age in which Epiphanius lived; it was little the temper of Epiphanius, to think or to speak favourably of those who were deemed hereticks. It was rather the practice to aggravate and to multiply their errors, and to vilify their characters: to charge them upon the

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* Περὶ Χριστοῦ δὲ, οὐκ οἶδα εἰπεῖν, εἰ καὶ αὐτοὶ τὴν τῶν προειρημένων περὶ Κηρινθου καὶ Μηρινθου μοχθηρὰν ἀχθεῖσι, ψιλὸν ἄνθρωπον νομίζουσιν· ἢ, καθὼς ἡ ἀλήθεια ἔχει, διὰ πνεύματος ἁγίου γεγεννῆσθαι ἐκ Μαρίας διαβεβαιοῦνται.

slightest grounds with every enormity, both in faith and practice. It is very unlikely, that Epiphanius would have been so tender of the reputation of these Nazarenes, as to confess his want of information about their opinions of the nature of Christ, had there been the least ground to suspect, or had there been so much as a suspicion current in his times, although it had been founded only on a general bad opinion of the sect, that they were heretical in this article. A general clamour, or the bare assertion of an earlier writer, would have fixed the imputation, without any nice inquiry into the evidence by which the charge might be supported. And since Epiphanius confesses, that he had no ground to say that these Nazarenes held Christ to be a mere man; the presumption is, that he ought to have said, that they affirmed, as the truth is, that he was begotten of Mary, by the Holy Ghost. But to affirm, "as the truth is, that he was begotten of Mary, by the Holy Ghost," in Epiphanius's sense of those words, was a full confession of his divinity. So that, if the opinions of these Nazarenes be of any importance for ascertaining the primitive faith; and conjectures are to be drawn, concerning their opinions, from Epiphanius's profession of his want of information; the fair conjecture, is the opposite of Dr Priestley's: namely, that the Nazarenes homologated with the church, as its opinions stood in the age of Epiphanius, when I suppose he will allow it to have been far gone from the primitive purity of his Unitarian faith; with this corrupt church, as Dr Priestley deems it, his friends, the Nazarenes, homologated upon the article of Christ's divinity.

12. But after all, of what importance is the opinion of these Nazarenes? Or how may the Catholick tradition be affected by the singularities of a sect? Of a sect

which lay under the censure of the church as heretical? Attend, my Reverend Brethren. It is in this that we have been so long, I believe I ought to add, so fatally mistaken. The Nazarenes were never censured! They were no sectaries! They were the very first, and because the first, they were the purest, the very best of Christians! Nazarene was the ancient name of the Jewish Christians!* Of the first members of the primitive church of Jerusalem—that original, parent church, the mother of us all; where James the brother of our Lord was bishop! In the opinions therefore of these Nazarenes, we have the opinions of those first Christians, who received, not only the baptismal ablution, but the illumination of the Spirit, at the hands of the apostles! You seem to ask me, by what evidence this important discovery is confirmed? By no evidence. The thing is not proved. It is asserted. In philosophical subjects Dr Priestley would be the last to reason from principles assumed without proof. But in divinity and ecclesiastical history, he expects that his own assertion, or that of writers of his own persuasion, however uninformed or prejudiced, should pass with the whole Christian world for proof of the boldest assumptions. The Nazarenes, it is confessed, were the progeny of the first Christians of the church of Jerusalem. But the name of Nazarene, you will bear me witness, was never heard of in the Christian church, as descriptive of the Jewish Christians, before their settlement in the northren parts of Galilee, upon the banishment of the Jews from Jerusalem, in the reign of Adrian.† *The Hebrews*, and *they*

* —— the Nazarenes (and the Jewish Christians never went by any other name.) Hist. Corrup. vol. i. p. 8.

† See the last paragraph of the sixth of my Letters in reply, and the seventh of those Letters, sec. 5,

of the circumcision, were the earlier names, by which the Jewish converts, who formed the church of Jerusasalem, had been distinguished from the Christians of the Gentiles. Their descendants, the Nazarenes, were at first perhaps heretical but in a single article; in maintaining the necessity of the observance of the Mosaick law, for the attainment of salvation under the gospel: whereas, their ancestors had indeed themselves adhered to their old law, but had declared against the absurdity of exacting a submission to the ceremonial part of it, from the Gentile converts. By degrees, however, these Nazarenes declined so far from the pure faith of that first race of Christians, from which they boasted their descent, that in Jerome's time, they were become heretical in that degree, that Jerome considered them as a Jewish sect rather than a Christian. "To this day," says Jerome, "a heresy prevails among the Jews in all the synagogues of the east, which is called that of the Minæi, who commonly go by the name of Nazarenes: who believe in Christ, the Son of God, born of the Virgin; and say that he was the person who suffered under Pontius Pilate, and rose again; in whom we ourselves believe. But from a desire of being Jews and Christians both at once, they are neither Jews nor Christians."*

13. It is rather for the sake of general truth, than for the attainment of victory in the present argument, that I am desirous to maintain the distinction which was ever made, till Zuicker attempted to confound it, be-

* Epist. ad Augustinum de disidio Petri et Pauli. tom. iii. fol. 155. B. edit. Froben.

tween the primitive church of Jerusalem and the sect of the Nazarenes, its heretical offspring. In the Trinitarian controversy, the distinction is of little importance; or rather, it would be of advantage to the argument of the orthodox party, if our faith needed other support, than that which the plain sense of the Scriptures, and the whole tenor of ecclesiastical history supply: it would be of singular advantage to our argument, that Dr Priestley should be able to establish Zuicker's extravagant position, that these Nazarenes were no other than the original members of the Hebrew church. Whoever they were, their orthodoxy, in the article of our Lord's divinity, is notorious. It is attested by most of the writers of antiquity that mention them. It is acknowledged by Jerome, at the very same time that he taxes them with the grossest heresy in other points. And were no express testimony to be produced, still it would be the fair and probable conclusion, from that very passage of Epiphanius, upon which Dr Priestley would build the contrary opinion. If therefore it could be proved, that these Nazarenes really were what Dr Priestley hath been taught by Zuicker to believe, the first converts of the circumcision; we who maintan the full divinity of Christ, should find, in the confession of the Nazarenes, the verdict of those first Christians in our favour. But since the fact is, that they were an heretical sect, which arose in the second century, from the ashes of the church of Jerusalem;* their opinions upon any article are totally insignificant, and can in no way affect the Catholick tradition. Still, therefore, the mo-

* See Letters in reply, vi. and vii.

dern Unitarian would serve his own cause but ill, who should be able to succeed in the attempt to prove, that the mere humanity of Christ was a tenet of the Nazarenes.

14. The neutrality of Epiphanius's evidence, is however, not the whole of the proof, by which our modern historian hath taken the pains to support an assertion so little to his purpose. It is alleged, only to corroborate a more direct proof, which is very proper to be produced, as another specimen of the sort of argument upon which our author's first proposition rests.

15. The Nazarenes and the Ebionites, he tells us, were the same people, and held the same tenets.* By the appellation of Ebionites, it is confessed, a certain sect, which denied the divinity of our Saviour, was originally distinguished. But how is it proved, that these Ebionites were the same with the Nazarenes? By a pretended acknowledgement of Origen and Epiphanius.† It is of great importance, for a just apprehension of the exact force of any writers arguments, to catch the idioms of his style; and an attention to this circumstance, must be particularly recommended to Dr Priestley's readers. One of the most striking peculiarities of his language, is a very singular use of the words *acknowledge* and *acknowledgment*. Acknowledgment, in the usual acceptation of the word in controversial writing, signifies a writer's avowel of a principle or a fact, which, as making for his adversary's argument, it might have

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* Hist. of Corrup. vol. i. p. 7.

† "—— both Origen and Epiphanius acknowledge, that the Nazarenes and Ebionites were the same people, and held the same tenets." Hist. of Corrup. vol. i. p. 7.

been for his purpose to conceal or to deny, but that the evidence of the thing extorted the confession. But with Dr Priestley, any expressions, which are capable of being drawn by construction and refinement, to a sense that may seem but indirectly favourable to his own notions, are an explicit *acknowledgment* of the writer who uses them, that things actually were, as Dr Priestley is inclined to represent them. If such expressions of one writer are quoted by another; they amount to an acknowledgment to the same purpose, on the part of the writer who makes the quotation. On the other hand, the acknowledgment of an original writer, may sometimes be inferred from a negligent citation. Hath Eusebius, complaining of a total disregard to truth among the sectaries who denied our Lord's divinity, appealed, in confirmation of the charge, to a writer of the second century; who alleges it against the Unitarians of his own time, as an instance of the most hardened effrontery, that they had the audacity to assert, that their tenets had been originally taught by the apostles, and were maintained by all the Roman bishops in succession, to the time of Victor?* This heavy accusation, thus supported by the testimony of an earlier writer, is a plain *acknowledgment*† on the part of Eusebius, that the Unitarians constantly claimed this high antiquity of their doctrine. And what may seem more paradoxical, this writer's appeal to "certain psalms and

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* Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. v. c. 28.

† "It is *acknowledged* by Eusebius, and others, "that the ancient Unitarians themselves constantly asserted, that their doctrine was the universal opinion of the Christian church, till the time of Victor." Hist. of Corrup. vol. ii. p. 486. Compare vol. i. p. 18, 19.

odes, the composition of faithful brethren in the first age, which celebrate the divinity of the Christ, the Word of God,"* is only a proof of Eusebius's inability to confute the claim, which, by his own acknowledgment, was set up.† Hath the learned Dr Samuel Clarke, in an inaccurate citation of a passage in Origen, made Origen speak of the Unitarians of his time as pious persons? This is a candid acknowledgment,‡ on the part of Origen, of the piety of those sectaries; whereas Origen says not that they were pious, but that they boasted|| that they were pious, or affected piety. Piety, and the affectation of piety, belong to opposite characters. According to this enlarged use of the word *acknowledgment*, it will indeed be very hazardous to deny but that an acknowledgment to any purpose may be found in any writer, or be drawn from any words. It is necessary therefore to declare, that it is only in the usual meaning of the word, that I take upon me to aver, that no acknowledgment of the supposed identity of the Nazarenes and the Ebionites, is to be found either in Origen or Epiphanius.§ Origen says, indeed, of the Jewish Christians of his own time, that they were Ebionites:¶ not meaning to make any acknowledgment in favour of the proper Ebionites, as no worse hereticks

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* Ψαλμοι δε ὁσοι καὶ ὡδαι, ἀδελφων ἀπ' ἀρχης ὑπο πιςων γραφεισαι, τον λογον τȣ θεȣ τον Χριςον ὑμνȣσι θεολογȣντες. Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. v. c. 28. Compare Ephes. v. 19. Col. iii. 16. James v. 13.

† "—— in refuting their pretensions to antiquity, he goes no further back than Irenæus and Justin Martyr." Hist. of Corrup. vol. i. p. 19.

‡ "Origen candidly calls these adherents to the strict unity of God, pious persons." Hist. of Corrup. vol. i. p. 57.

|| —— πολλȣς φιλοθεȣς ἐιναι ἐυχομενȣς ——

§ See Appendix.

¶ Contra Cels. lib. 2.

than the Nazarenes; but rather to stigmatize the Nazarenes with an opprobious appellation. And the only conclusion which is to be drawn from this passage of Origen, is, that the word Ebionite had, in his time, outgrown its original meaning; which it easily might do; inasmuch as, by its derivation, it is not naturally descriptive of any particular set of opinions; but barely expressive of the contempt, in which those who bestowed it, held the knowledge and understanding of the party on which it was bestowed. It was therefore likely to be variously applied at different times, according as one or another folly incurred the contempt either of any particular writer, or of the age in which he flourished. Accordingly, it appears from ecclesiastical history, that the use of it was various and indefinite. Sometimes it was the peculiar name of those sects, which denied both the divinity of our Lord, and his miraculous conception—Then its meaning was extended to take in another party; which, admitting the miraculous conception of Jesus, still denied his divinity, and questioned his previous existence—And at last, it seems the Nazarenes, whose error was rather a superstitious severity in their practice than any deficiency in their faith, were included by Origen in the infamy of the appellation. It was natural indeed for Origen, fond as he was of mystick interpretations of the Jewish Scriptures, and possessed with the imagination, that every particular of the ritual service, and every occurrence in the Jewish story, was typical of something in the gospel dispensation; it was natural for Origen, to think meanly of a sect who held the observance of the letter of the ceremonial law, to be an essential part of a Christian's duty. They certainly had little apprehension of the free spirit of the religion

they professed; and this, with Origen, would be the surest mark of a low and beggarly understanding. It is in this reproachful appellation, which he alone of all the writers of antiquity hath bestowed upon the Nazarenes, that Dr Priestley hath discovered his acknowledgment in favour of the Ebionites. For Epiphanius, who is joined with Origen in this acknowledgment, he describes the Nazarenes and the Ebionites as different sects, maintaining different opinions; except that they agreed in retaining more or less of the Mosaick service.*

16. Among other specimens of our author's happy art of turning every thing, by a dexterous interpretation, to his own purpose; it were injustice to the injured memory of Eusebius, not to mention the attempt that is made to shake the credit of his history, by representing the unfairness with which that candid writer is supposed to treat the Unitarians; where he says, "that Theodotus, who appeared about the year 190, was the first who held that our Saviour was a mere man; when in refuting their pretensions to antiquity, he goes no farther back than to Irenæus and Justin Martyr, though in his own writings alone he might have found a refutation of his assertion."† It must be confessed, that any one who should assert that Theodotus was the first who taught a doctrine, which sunk our Lord into the rank of mere man, might easily be confuted from the eccle-

* See this two-fold question, concerning the faith of the Nazarenes, and the distinction between the Nazarenes and Ebionites, largely discussed in the second of Dr Priestley's Letters to me, the sixth and seventh of my Letters in reply, the third of Dr Priestley's second Letters, and my remarks on his second Letters,—Part II. chap. ii. and iii.

† Hist. of Corrup. vol. i. p. 19.

iastical history of Eusebius; in which the Cerinthians and the Ebionites, who are taxed by all antiquity with that impiety, are referred to an earlier period. The truth however seems to be, that the doctrine of our Lord's humanity, like all corruptions, had its stages; that it was carried by degrees to the height which it at last attained; and that Theodotus, in this article, so far surpassed the earlier heresiarchs, that the merit of being the inventor of the mere humanity, in the precise and full meaning of the words, is with great propriety and truth ascribed to him. When the Cerinthians and the Ebionites affirmed, that Jesus had no existence previous to Mary's conception, and that he was literally and physically the carpenter's son; it might justly be said of them, that they asserted the mere humanity of the Redeemer: especially, as it could not be foreseen, that the impiety would ever go a greater length than this, of ascribing to him an origin merely human. These hereticks, however, went no farther, as I conceive, than to deny our Lord's original divinity: they admitted I know not what unintelligible exaltation of his nature,* which took place, as they conceived, upon his ascension, by which he became no less the object of worship, than if his nature had been originally divine. But when a more daring (though, I confess, a far more consistent) sect arose; denying that our Lord in glory, is more than a mortal man, raised, as all the just will one day be, to immortality; or that he is more the object of adoration than Enoch or Elijah; these younger hereticks, eclipsed the glory of their timid ancestors, and might justly claim

* See the fourteenth of my Letters in reply, sec. 5.

the honour, of being the first assertors of the mere humanity of Christ; for they were indeed the first, who made humanity the whole of his condition. It was undoubtedly in this exalted sense, that the humanity of Christ was taught by Theodotus; for nothing short of this might serve his purpose; which, as we learn from Epiphanius, was to extenuate the guilt of a renunciation of his faith, which he had made under the terrors of persecution, by setting up a plea, that, in renouncing Christ, he had not renounced his God, but a man. This plea could be of no service to Theodotus's cause, unless Christ were a man, not only in his origin, but at the time when Theodotus renounced him. It was therefore that sublime doctrine, which is at this day taught in the conventicles* of Dr Priestley and Mr Lindsey; the doctrine of our Lord's mere undeified humanity; which Theodotus, the learned tanner of Byzantium, a deserter of his Lord, and a fugitive from his country, broached at Rome, in the end of the second century. This doctrine, Dr Priestley will perhaps find it difficult to trace to any earlier period, or to any more respectable origin. No injury, therefore, is done to the Unitarian cause, when Theodotus is said to be the first author of the Unitarian doctrine, in this exalted, finished, form. But after all, this is not, what Dr Priestley imagines it to be, the assertion of Eusebius. It is the assertion of a

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* That the assemblies held by Mr Lindsey, in Essex-Street, and by Dr Priestley, at Birmingham, are strictly CONVENTICLES, in the genuine forensick meaning of the word, see proved in the seventeenth of my Letters in reply, sec. 8; and my Remarks on Dr Priestley's second Letters,—Part II. chap. iv. sec. 6. And that Dr Priestley is, by his principles, disqualified to be the pastor of any thing better than a Conventicle, see proved by his own confession, in the seventeenth of his second Letters to me.

writer cited by Eusebius without any name. It should seem that he was of the Latin church, and that his expressions are to be understood with particular reference to the state of religion in the western world, especially at Rome. Now it was probably true, that Theodotus was the very first, who, at Rome, in any sense, taught the mere humanity of Christ. For notwithstanding the corrupt state of the Roman church in later ages, it is notorious, that she was the last of all, infected with any gross heresy. As for the pretensions of the Unitarians, which it might be incumbent upon Eusebius to refute, they were not simply pretensions to antiquity. The antiquity of the Unitarian doctrine, in a certain form, is confessed. Its antiquity is proved, by the express censure which is passed upon it in St John's writings, both in his first epistle and in his gospel, as a dangerous error which was in being when he wrote. But the pretensions of the Unitarians, which Eusebius contradicts, were pretensions to a *prior* antiquity: the pretence that their own doctrine was original, and the doctrine of the church, in the time of Zephyrinus, novel. And in refuting these pretensions, the writer quoted by Eusebius, goes back to the apostolick age: he goes back to those psalms and odes, which seem to be alluded to in the apostolick epistles, and to the books of holy writ.*

II.

I. By these specimens, a judgment may be formed, of the arguments and of the facts by which our author's first assumption is supported. By exposing the weak-

* See this question about Theodotus, pursued in the eighth of Dr Priestley's first Letters to me, the postcript, sec. 4; and the fourteenth of my Letters in reply.

ness of our author's arguments, and by the proof which hath been produced from the writings of Ignatius, that the divinity of the Son, his full divinity, was acknowledged by the immediate disciples of the apostles; (a proof, which, had not the work been long since done by the learned Bishop Bull, might have been strengthened with a copious collection of passages to the same purpose from Ignatius, Barnabas, Clemens Romanus, Hermas, and the authentick acts of the martyrdom of Polycarp,) by the detection of the fallacy of the arguments on the one side, and by the positive proof adduced on the other; our author's notion of the faith of the first Christians, that it was purely Unitarian, is overturned. And if this notion of the first Christians be overturned; the assertion, that the doctrine of our Lord's divinity was an invention of the second race, falls with it. For what was believed by the first race, could be no invention of the second. Nor can any argument be drawn, from any resemblance that may be imagined between the Trinity of the Christian church, and the three principles of the Platonists, that the doctrine of the apostles was not rightly understood by their first converts; unless indeed it could be proved, (which is the tacit assumption upon which this objection is founded,) that the discoveries of revelation, and the investigations of philosophy, may never coincide. But why is it supposed, that nothing can be a part of an inspired teacher's doctrine, which had been taught before by wise men, who were not inspired? Were every iota of the gospel doctrine to be found in the writings of the Greek philosophers, this would not be sufficient to set aside the pretensions of the first preachers of Christianity to a divine commission—the just conclusion from so per-

fect an agreement would only be, that for the great importance of these doctrines to the manners of mankind, it had pleased God to make discoveries to all men by revelation, to which a few only could attain by abstract reasoning. The case indeed is far otherwise. It is ever to be remembered, for the mortification of man's pride, and to the praise of God's mercy; that "when the world by wisdom know not God," when philosophy had made its utmost efforts, not entirely without success, but with little general advantage; "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching," by a method of instruction, which in the article of religious information, hath abolished the distinction between the philosopher and the idiot, "to save them that believe." But had our supposed case actually obtained, had revelation discovered nothing more to all, than reason had previously taught a few, still to teach all and to teach a few, is so different a business, that the previous attainments of philosophers, would have afforded no objection against the pretensions of the first preachers of the gospel, sufficient to overturn the evidence by which their claim to a divine commission is supported. Much less may a resemblance, more or less exact, between faith and philosophy in single articles, create a presumption, that those articles of faith, of which certain philosophical opinions seem to carry a resemblance, made no part of the doctrine which those inspired teachers taught. The resemblance may seem indeed a wonderful fact, which may justly draw the attention of the serious and inquisitive. And if it should be deemed incredible, as well it may, that reason, in her utmost strength, should ever ascend so high, as to attain even to a distant glimpse of truths, which have ever been esteemed the most mysterious discoveries of reve-

lation; it will become a question of the highest curiosity and importance to determine, by what means the Platonick school came by those notions of the Godhead, which, had they been of later date than the commencement of Christianity, might have passed for a very mild corruption of the Christian faith; but being in truth much older, have all the appearance of a near, though very imperfect view, of the doctrine which was afterwards current in the Christian church.

2. The inquiry becomes more important, when it is discovered, that these notions were by no means peculiar to the Platonick school; that the Platonists pretended to be no more than the expositors of a more ancient doctrine, which is traced from Plato to Parmenides; from Parmenides to his masters of the Pythagorean sect; from the Pythagoreans to Orpheus, the earliest of the Grecian Mystagogues; from Orpheus to the secret lore of the Egyptian priests, in which the foundations of the Orphick theology were laid. Similar notions of a triple principle prevailed in the Persian and Chaldæan theology; and vestiges, even of the worship of a Trinity, were discernable in the Roman superstition in a very late age. This worship, the Romans had received from their Trojan ancestors; for the Trojans brought it with them into Italy from Phrygia. In Phrygia it was introduced by Dardanus, so early as in the ninth century after Noah's flood—Dardanus carried it with him from Samothrace, where the personages that were the objects of it, were worshiped under the Hebrew name of the Cabirim. Who these Cabirim might be, has been matter of unsuccessful inquiry to many learned men. The utmost that is known with certainty is, that they were originally three, and were called by way of emi-

nence, the Great or Mighty Ones: for that is the import of the Hebrew name. And of the like import is their Latin appellation, *Penates. Dii per quos penitus spiramus, per quos habemus corpus, per quos rationem animi possidemus.** *Dii qui sunt intrinsecus, atque in intimis penetralibus cæli*†. Thus the joint worship of Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva, the Triad of the Roman Capitol, is traced to that of the THREE MIGHTY ONES in Samothrace ‡; which was established in that island, at what precise time it is impossible to determine; but earlier, if Eusebius may be credited, than the days of Abraham.

3. The notion therefore of a Trinity, more or less removed from the purity of the Christian faith, is found to have been a leading principle in all the ancient schools of philosophy, and in the religions of almost all nations; and traces of an early popular belief of it, appear even in the abominable rites of idolatrous worship. If reason was insufficient for this great discovery, what could be the means of information, but what the Platonists themselves assign Θεοπαραδοτος Θεολογια. "A theology delivered from the gods," *i. e.* a revelation. This is the account which Platonists, who were no Christians, have given of the origin of their master's doctrine. But from what revelation could they derive their information, who lived before the Christian, and had no light from the Mosaick? For whatever some of the early fathers may have imagined, there is no evi-

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* Macrob. Saturnal. lib. iii. c. 4.

† Varro apud Arnob. lib. iii. p. 123. Lugd. Bat. 1651.

‡ —— Tarquinius Demarati Corinthii filius,—*Samothraciis mystici imbutus*, uno templo ac sub eodem tecto, numina memorata conjungit. Macrob. Saturnal. lib. iii. c. 4.

dence that Plato or Pythagoras were at all acquainted with the Mosaick writings: not to insist, that the worship of a Trinity is traced to an earlier age than that of Plato or of Pythagoras, or even of Moses. Their information could be only drawn from traditions founded upon earlier revelations; from scattered fragments of the ancient patriarchal creed; that creed, which was universal before the defection of the first idolaters, which the corruptions of idolatry, gross and enormous as they were, could never totally obliterate.* Thus, the doctrine of the Trinity, is rather confirmed than discredited by the suffrage of the heathen sages; since the resemblance of the Christian faith and the Pagan philosophy in this article, when fairly interpreted, appears to be nothing less than the consent of the latest and the earliest revelations.

III.

1. Our author's assumption, that the doctrine of our Lord's Divinity, was an innovation of the Platonick Christians of the second century, being overthrown by direct proof, that this pretended innovation was a part of the faith of the first Christians; all oblique and secondary arguments, that might otherwise create a presumption in our author's favour, are rendered wholly insignificant. To Dr Priestley, it seems a circumstance of great importance, that these early writers "sometimes drop the personification of the Logos, (which in his opinion had been their first step towards the deification

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* ——— "What Socrates said of him, what Plato writ, and the rest of the heathen philosophers of several nations, is all no more than the twilight of revelation, after the sun of it was set in the race of Noah." Dryden's Prefare to *Religio Laici*.

of our Saviour,*) and speak of it as the mere attribute of God."† This he imputes to the difficulty, with which new opinions lay hold upon the mind; and to the natural prevalency of good sense, which is such, that it will in all cases often get the better of imagination.‡ Facts themselves should be established, before consequences are deduced from them. Let us therefore consider the example by which this assertion is supported.

2. Theophilus of Antioch says, "that when God said, *Let us make man*, he spake to nothing but his own Logos, or wisdom."§ It must be confessed, that the example is happily chosen. It is clear, that in this passage of Theophilus, as it is expressed in Dr Priestley's translation, the Logos is described as *nothing but* the Wisdom of God: nothing but *His own* wisdom. His own Wisdom must be that eternal Wisdom, which is a power of his own Mind, a property of his own Person: and, to say that God spake to "nothing but his own Wisdom," is to say, that he spake to no one but himself. Dr Priestley, methinks, hath spared to make the use he might have done of this passage of Theophilus; which seems not only to be, an instance in which Theophilus drops the personification of the Logos in his own writings; but to prove, that as far as the interpretation of the Old Testament is of any importance, the authority of this learned and ancient bishop of Antioch stands with the Unitarian scheme. This

* Hist. of Corrup. part i. sec. ii.
† Ibid. vol. i. p. 35.
‡ Ibid.
§ Ibid.

learned bishop tells us, that the writers of the old Testament, if ever they seem to allude to a plurality of persons in the Godhead, speak figuratively, and are to be understood accordingly. The allusion is perhaps no where stronger, than in those words of Moses, in the book of Genesis, "God said, Let us make." God not only speaks, "God said;" but God speaks in the plural number, "Let us make;" as though persons were addressed, who were to take part with the speaker in the business to be done. Theophilus, the celebrated bishop of Antioch; Theophilus, so respectable for his antiquity, his piety, and his learning; Theophilus cautions us, not to be over-confident of the consequences which we draw from this rigid exposition of the sacred writer's words. Theophilus affirms, that the expression is purely figurative; signifying only, that before man was made, the purpose of making him arose, and was contemplated, in the divine intellect. The expression describes an internal deliberation of the Divine Mind concerning the intended work; just as the private thoughts and purposes of a man, are sometimes expressed under the figure of a discourse passing within himself. All this, Theophilus affirms in Dr Priestley's English. Nothing of this Theophilus affirms, speaking for himself, in his own language,* ȣ̓κ ἀλλω δε τινι εἰρηκε, Ποιησωμεν, ἀλλ᾽ ἠ τῳ ἑαυτȣ Λογῳ, καὶ τη ἑαυτȣ Σοφιᾳ. The "nothing but" of Dr Priestley's English, conveys quite another idea than the ȣ̓κ ἀλλῳ τινι ἀλλ᾽ ἠ of Theophilus's Greek. The Logos and the Wisdom, as different names of one thing, are connected by the disjunctive *or*,

* Ad. Autolyc. p. 114. Oxon. 1684.

in Dr Priestley's English; as names of different things, they are connected by the copulative *and*, (Καί,) in Theophilus's Greek. The exact rendering of Theophilus's words is to this effect: "It was to no other person" (that is the proper force of ἐκ ἀλλῳ τινι, *haud alii cuipiam*) "It was to no other person that he said, *Let us make*, than to his own Word, and to his own Wisdom." τῳ ἑαυτῳ Λογῳ καὶ τῃ ἑαυτῳ Σοφιᾳ. The repetition of the demonstrative article with the pronoun, as well as the connection by the copulative, clearly shows that Λογος and Σοφια, the Word and the Wisdom, are different things. Hath Dr Priestley written a history of the Corruptions of Christianity, and hath he yet to learn, that in the language of Theophilus, and of the best writers of his age, the Word and the Wisdom, (Λογος and Σοφια,) are used as proper names of the second and third persons of the Trinity? If his own reading in those early fathers hath been so confined, that not one of the clear unequivocal instances that occur in Theophilus himself, in Origen, in Tatian, and Irenæus, hath ever fallen under his own proper observation, he might have been informed of this peculiarity of their style, from the notes which accompany the text of Theophilus, in Bishop Fell's edition, printed at Oxford in 1684; which, as it is inserted in his catalogue* of *principal* editions, it is possible he may have seen. Theophilus's assertion, that God spake to no other person than his Word and his wisdom, is an assertion, that he spake to persons of no less dignity, than the Son and the Holy Ghost. It is

* Dr Priestley's Preface, p. xxii.

an assertion of the Catholick exposition* of the text, and of the consequences deduced from it, in opposition to the Jewish expositors of that age; who contended, that this speech of God was addressed to the angels. Theophilus therefore, in this passage, hath not dropped the personification of the Logos; that is, he hath not receded from the assertion of the personality of the Word. He affirms not, that the Logos, so often mentioned by himself and other writers as a person, is no person, but merely the Divine Attribute of Wisdom; which, in the usual language of grammarians, were rather to assert the personification† than to drop it: but by the names of the Word and the Wisdom, he distinguishes two different persons; saying, these were the persons to whom God spake.

IV.

I. We have seen by what sort of arguments, our author's two first assertions, "That the faith of the first age was Unitarian, and that the doctrine of our Lord's divinity was an invention of the second," are supported. If he hath succeeded no better in the proof of his third assertion, concerning the Platonick Christians of the second age, the inventors, as he would have it, of our Lord's divinity,—that the divinity which they set up was only of that secondary sort, which was admitted by the Arians, including neither eternity, nor

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* That this is the true exposition, that the text describes a consultation which passed between the persons of the Godhead, is shown with great brevity, but with the highest degree of evidence and perspicuity, in Dr Kennicott's dissertation on the Tree of Life, p. 29, 30.—Compare the same dissertation, p, 71.

† Of my misapprehension of the word *personification*, as used by Dr Priestley, and how little it affects my argument, see the thirteenth of my Letters in in reply, sec. 2—5.

any proper necessity of existence, having the mere name of divinity, without any thing of the real form; if the proof of this third assertion should be found to be equally infirm with that of the other two, his notion of the gradual progress of opinions, from the mere Unitarian doctrine to the Arian, and from the Arian doctrine to the Athanasian faith, must be deemed a mere dream, or fiction, in every part.

2. It must be acknowledged, that the first converts from the Platonick school, took advantage of the resemblance between the evangelick and Platonick doctrine, on the subject of the Godhead, to apply the principles of their old philosophy, to the explication and the confirmation of the articles of their faith. They defended it by arguments drawn from Platonick principles; they even propounded it in Platonick language: which, to themselves and their contemporaries, was the most familiar and intelligible that could be employed, upon so abstruse a subject. Nor was this practice to be condemned, so long as the Scriptures and the Catholick traditions were made the test of truth; so long as revelation was not pressed into the service of philosophy, by any accommodation of the pure evangelical doctrine to preconceived opinions: but philosophy was made to exert her powers in the defence of revelation, and to lend her language to be the vehicle of its sacred truths. These might be deemed the most promising means that could be employed, for bringing over more converts from the Pagan schools; and the writers, who evangelized in this philosophical style, conceived perhaps, that they had the sanction of an Apostle's example, "for becoming all things to all men, that they might gain some."

3. But whatever might be the purity of their intentions, they were guilty of an unpardonable deviation from the primitive faith, if it be true, that they maintained the doctrine which Dr Priestley ascribes to them; namely, that the Son is the mere contingent creature of the Father's will and power; a production which hath not always existed.* We have seen, that this was not the belief of the first age; and if it is to be found in the writings of the second, it could indeed be nothing better than a corruption of religion by philosophy.

4. To judge of the truth of a writer's proposition, and even to divine of what sort the arguments will be, which he will allege in support of it, it is sometimes sufficient that the precise tenor of it be clearly understood. They were converts from Platonism, they were Christians, who, with their Christianity, are supposed to have retained their Platonism, to whom Dr Priestley ascribes the notion of a Logos which had not always existed, but began to be, like other creatures, by an act of the Father's will. After all that Dr Priestley hath written, about the resemblance between the ecclesiastical and the Platonick Trinity; he hath yet, it seems, to learn, that a created Logos, a Logos which had ever not existed, was no less an absurdity in the academy, than it is an impiety in the church. The converts from Platonism must have renounced their philosophy, before they could be the authors of this absurd, this monstrous opinion.† As the notion that this doctrine took its rise with them, betrays a total ignorance of the genuine prin-

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* Hist. of Corrup. vol. i. p. 42, 44, 62.

† See more upon this subject in the eighth of Dr Priestley's first Letters to me, and the thirteenth of my Letters in reply. sec. 8.

ciples of their school; it is easy to foresee, that the arguments brought in support of it, can only be founded in gross misconstructions of their language. That this is indeed the case, will be abundantly proved by a single instance.

5. Athenagoras is one of the writers to whom Dr Priestley refers for a proof of his assertion. The passage which he cites, as affording a proof that Athenagoras believed not that Christ had always existed, or that the Logos had always existed, otherwise than as an attribute of the Divine Mind, happens to be one, in which that Philosophick father asserts the eternity of the Logos, as a distinct person, in the most explicit terms; and argues in support of it, from a certain relation of the Logos to the paternal intellect, which the name, Logos, implies. "Athenagoras," says Dr Priestley, "calls Christ the first production of the Father; but says, he was not always actually produced; for that from the beginning, God, being an eternal mind, had reason in himself, being from eternity rational."* But let us hear Athenagoras himself.† "If," says he, "endowed as you are with superior understanding," (he addresses the Emperors Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, and Lucius Aurelius Commodus,) it should occur to you to inquire, whence it is that he is called a Son, I will explain it in a few words. (It is) that he is to the Father (as) the first offspring. Not as something made, (This is the true sense of the words, in which Dr Priestley imagines that it is said that Christ was not always produced) "Not as something made. For God, being

* Hist. of Corrup. vol. i. p. 86.

† See the entire Greek passage, p 62.

an eternal intelligence, himself from the beginning had the Logos in himself, being eternally rational." The learned father undertakes to explain to the philosophical emperors, why the second person in the ever blessed Trinity, is called the Son. He tells them, that this name is expressive of a certain relation, which the second person stands in to the first, who is called the Father; which relation is that of the eldest born. But lest the relation of primogeniture should lead to the notion of a proper physical generation, which would sink the Son into the rank of a creature, (for generation is only a particular way in which certain things are made,) he says, that the birth or generation of the Son, is not to be understood as if he were something that had been ever made; as if his being had commenced, at any certain time, by the inducement of a form upon a pre-existing material. For that is the general notion of a making; although in common speech it is usual to say of those things only, that they are made, to which the form is given at once by the hand of the artist. When the form is gradually brought on by the plastick powers of nature, the secret process is called generation: which is therefore but a sort of making, and differs from that which is usually called a making, in the means only by which the end is compassed. Athenagoras therefore gives the emperors a caution, not to understand by the generation of the Son, a generation in the literal sense of the word, which comes under the general notion of a making: not to understand by it any thing like that natural process, by which the bodies of plants and animals, and some other substances, are carried forward from a potential to an actual existence. The generation of the Son cannot be understood, he says,

of any such production, because his actual existence is from eternity. This, he says, is the necessary consequence of the confessed eternity of the Father. The Logos hath existed from eternity, in union with the Father; "because God, being eternally rational, ever had the Logos in himself." The sense is, that the personal subsistence of a Divine Logos is implied in the very idea of a God. And the argument rests on a principle which was common to all the Platonick fathers, and seems to be founded in Scripture, that the existence of the Son, flows necessarily from the Divine Intellect exerted on itself; from the Father's contemplation of his own perfections. But as the Father ever was, his perfections have ever been, and his intellect hath been ever active. But perfections, which have ever been, the ever active Intellect must ever have contemplated; and the contemplation which hath ever been, must ever have been accompanied with its just effect, the personal existence of the Son. Athenagoras having thus proved, that the generation of the Son can be only a figurative generation, proceeds to explain the figure, by assigning the particular transaction to which he conceives it to allude: which is no commencement of the Son's existence; not even that act of the Paternal Mind, in which the existence of the Son originates; but the going forth of the Son to exert his powers in the business of creation. "He is," says Athenagoras, "to the Father as the first offspring; not as something that was ever made: but that he went forth to be idea and energy in material substances, which lay yet in chaos, unqualified and undistinguished; the dense promiscuously mingled with the rare, waiting the operation of the active spirit to im-

pregnate them with form."* Here, indeed, the Son of God is called an idea, and an energy. But it is not, that he is understood to be an unsubstantial idea, or energy, of the Paternal Mind; but a living idea, energizing on the matter of the universe, to stamp it with the forms of things. And his generation is affirmed to be no commencement of his existence, but the first exertion of his powers in the production of external substances: or, to use a more Platonick phrase, the first projection of his energies. προβολη των ἐνεργηματων.

6. If any thing be justly reprehensible in the notions of the Platonick Christians, it is this conceit, which seems to be common to Athenagoras with them all, and is a key to the meaning of many obscure passages in their writings, that the external display of the powers of the Son, in the business of creation, is the thing intended, in the Scripture language, under the figure of his

* εἰ δε, δἰ ὑπερβολην συνεσεως, σκοπειν υμιν επεισιν, ὁ παις τι βουλεται· ερω δια βραχεων, πρωτον γεννημα ειναι τω πατρι, ουκ ως γενομενον· εξ αρχης γαρ ὁ Θεος, νους αιδιος ων, ειχεν αυτος εν εαυτω τον λογον· αιδιως λογικος ων· αλλ᾽ ως των υλικων συμπαντων αποιου φυσεως και γης οχειας υποκειμενων δικην, μεμιγμενων των παχυμερεστερων προς τα κουφοτερα, επ᾽ αυτοις ιδεα και ενεργεια ειναι προελθων. There seems to be some corruption in the words και γης. A learned clergyman of the archdeaconry of St. Alban's, conjectures, that γης should be της. Nor can I devise any better emendation. The general sense of the passage cannot but be very clear, to those to whom the imagery of the Platonists is in any degree familiar.

A passage of Hermes Trismegistus, preserved by Suidas, and Cedrenus, and Melela, may somewhat illustrate this passage of Athenagoras. Ην φως νοερον προ φωτος νοερου, και ουδεν ετερον ην η᾽ τουτου ενοτης· αει εν εαυτω ων, αει τω εαυτου νοι και φωτι και πνευματι παντα περιεχει· εκτος τουτου ου᾽ θεος, ουκ αγγελος, ου᾽ δαιμων, ουκ ουσια τις αλλη· παντων γαρ κυριος, και θεος, και πατηρ, και παντα υπ αυτου και εν αυτω εστι. ὁ γαρ Λογος αυτου προελθων, παντελειος και γονιμος και δημιουργος εν γονιμω υδατι πεσων* εγκυον εποιησε το υδωρ.

* Malela has εν γονιμω φυσει πεσων, for εν γονιμω υδατι.

generation.* A conceit which seems to have no certain foundation in holy writ, and no authority in the opinions and the doctrines of the preceding age : and it seems to have betrayed some of those who were the most wedded to it, into the use of a very improper language; as if a new relation had taken place between the first and the second person, when the creative powers were first exerted. The indiscretion of presuming to affix a determinate meaning upon a figurative expression, of which no particular exposition can be safely drawn from holy writ, is in some degree atoned by the object which these writers had in view. It was evidently their intention, to guard the expressions of Scripture from misconstruction. They thought to lead men away from the notion of a literal generation, by assigning to the figure a particular meaning, which it might naturally bear, and which, whether it was the true sense of it or no, seemed not to clash with any explicit part of the revelation. The conversion of an attribute into a person, whatever Dr Priestley may imagine, is a notion to which they were entire strangers. They held indeed, that the existence of the Son necessarily and inseparably attached to the attributes of the Paternal Mind: insomuch that the Father could no more be without the Son, than without his own attributes. But that the Son had been a mere attribute, before he became a person ; or that the Paternal attributes were older than the Son's personal existence, is a doctrine which they would have heard with horror and amazement. With horror as Christians ; with amazement as philosophers !

* See the thirteenth of my Letters in reply, sec. 12, 15.

7. It is but justice to Dr Priestley, to acknowledge, what indeed he ought to have acknowledged for himself, that in this misinterpretation of the Platonick father's, he is not original: that he hath upon his side the respectable authority of two very eminent divines of the Roman church,—Petavius and Huetius: which however is no more than a single authority; the pious bishop of Avranches, upon this subject, being but the echo of the very learned Jesuit. It is not the season to revive past quarrels: one is therefore unwilling to recollect the motives, which induced Petavius to belie his better knowledge, and to charge the philosophical fathers of the second century with errors, which he was too learned not to know no Platonist could entertain. But at the time when Petavius wrote, the minds of the most enlightened and liberal of the Romanists, were so ill reconciled to the separation of the reformed churches from their communion, that it was the fashion for the champions of the Papal superstition, in order to weaken the support which they were sensible the Protestant cause received, from the writings of the fathers of the three first centuries, to take every method to derogate from their authority. And this, it was thought, could in no way be more effectually done, than by bringing them under a suspicion of misbelief, in doctrines which the reformed churches, and the Roman, hold in equal reverence. The learned Petavius considered not, that he sacrificed the cause of our common Christianity to the private views of his own church, in thus attempting to corrupt the stream of tradition at the very fountain-head. His arguments, which Dr Priestley hath attempted to revive, are examined and confuted with great erudition and ability, by the excellent Bishop

Bull, in the third section of his "Defence of the Nicene Faith.

8. The last specimen which I shall produce, of Dr Priestley's manner of arguing from authorities, shall be taken from his short account of the word TRINITY.* This word, he says, first made its appearance in the writings of Theophilus, bishop of Antioch. But Dr Priestley thinks "it is not clear that by it he meant, a Trinity consisting of the same persons that it was afterwards made to consist of:" and he affirms, that it is certain, a Trinity of persons in the Godhead, was not meant by Theophilus; and thus Theophilus for the second time, is brought to give evidence against his own opinion. But whence arises the certainty, that a Trinity of persons is not meant by Theophilus? From no other circumstance, that I can perceive, but that the word Trinity is expressly expounded in the text of Theophilus, by God, his Word, and his Wisdom. "The three days," says Theophilus, "which preceded the creation of the luminaries, were types of the Trinity; of God, and of his Word, and of his Wisdom."† It hath already been observed, that God, his Word, and his Wisdom, in the phraseology of Theophilus's age, were used for Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. It is unnecessary, in this assembly, to cite the numerous examples that occur in Theophilus, Tatian, Irenæus, and Origen. It may be more useful

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* Hist. of Corrup. vol. i. p. 99.

† ωσαυτως και αι τρεις ημεραι (προ) των φωστηρων γεγονυιαι, τυπος εισιν της τριαδος· του Θεου, και του Λογου αυτου, και της Σοφιας αυτου. Theoph. ad Autolyc. lib. ii. p. 106. Oxon. 1684. I have taken the liberty to insert the preposition προ, the want of it being evidently an omission.

to explain the grounds upon which, as I conceive, this language was adopted.

9. We have seen that the Platonick fathers, although they held the eternity of the second person no less than of the first, imagined, that his generation signified a particular transaction, which took place at a certain time. And it is probable that, although they held the eternity of the Holy Spirit, yet they conceived, that the procession expressed some projection of his energies, which took place at the same time with that, which they understood to be the generation of the Son. They imagined, that the second person was not properly a Son, before that event, which they understood by his generation: and they would equally imagine, that the third was not properly the Spirit, before the event which they understood by his procession. But they conceived, that the second person had ever been the Word, and that the third had ever been the Wisdom. Of the first they conceived, that he was not properly a Father, before the second was a Son; although he ever had been God. I have already given my opinion of these subtle distinctions; for which the best apology (for an apology they need) is the evident good intention of the writers, who first maintained them. But upon these distinctions, whether just or visionary, their phraseology seems to have been founded. They thought the names of God, the Word, and the Wisdom, which express of each of the three divine persons, what each hath always been; were appellations to be generally preferred to those of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; which express relations only, which, according to their fancy, had not always been. And this explains the reason, why they used

the word God, as the peculiar appellation of the Father. It was not that they scrupled to ascribe an equal divinity to all the three Persons; but that, rejecting the simpler nomenclature founded on relations, they desired to call each person, by the name which they conceived to be most descriptive of his essence: and of the essence of the Father, they could find no name at all descriptive, but the general appellation,—God.

10. The three names therefore, God, the Word, and the Wisdom, in the language of Theophilus's age, were understood to be equivalent to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: and when Theophilus expounds the word Trinity, by God, his Word, and his Wisdom, it is just the same thing as if he had rendered it by Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. How this exposition may create a doubt, whether Theophilus's Trinity consisted of the same persons with the Trinity of later ages; how it may produce a certainty, that Theophilus's was not a Trinity of persons in the Godhead, it is not my business to explain. Dr Priestley should have opened this mystery; but he hath not condescended to give his readers any farther light than his own naked assertion, that the thing is, as he would choose that it should be; which in this, as in other cases, he seems to think may pass for a sufficient proof, of any of the paradoxes of his own party.

11. Perhaps his doubt about the real meaning of the word, and his confident persuasion that it was no Trinity of persons in the Godhead, have arisen from the obscurity of which he complains, in the subsequent part of the sentence, where the Word and the Wisdom are mentioned again. It is indeed but reasonable to suppose, that these words are used in the same sense in both places. But in this second place, the Wisdom,

Dr Priestley might imagine, could be no divine person. For in Dr Priestley's English, the latter clause of the sentence runs thus: "The fourth day is the type of Man, who needs light, that the Word may be God, and the Man Wisdom." This passage, Dr Priestley observes, is "certainly obscure enough." You all, I am persuaded, agree in the truth of his remark; and you will equally agree in mine, if I venture to say much more of the latter clause: that it is certainly unintelligible—in Dr Priestley's translation. But turn to the original—the whole obscurity will vanish; and instead of it, you will find that striking perspicuity of language, which is the characteristick beauty of Theophilus's style. Having said, that the three first days of creation were types of the Trinity, Theophilus adds, "That the fourth was a type of Man, who is in need of light. That there might be, or, so that there is, God, the Word, the Wisdom, Man."* This last clause is nothing but an enumeration of all that had been mentioned, as typified in the first four days of creation. To explain how these days were types of what they are supposed to represent, might indeed be difficult: but in the age of Theophilus, the great art of interpreting the Old Testament, was supposed to consist in making types out of every thing. The sense, however, of the writer, is expressed with the greatest perspicuity. It is evident from his own exposition of the word, that he speaks of no other Trinity than, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. It appears therefore, from the testimony of Theophilus, that the

* ωσαυτως και αι τρεις ημεραι (προ) των φωστηρων γεγονυιαι, τυποι εισιν της τριαδος· του Θεου, και του Λογου αυτου, και της Σοφιας αυτου. τεταρτη δε τυπος εστιν ανθρωπου· ο προσδεης του φωτος· ινα η Θεος, Λογος, Σοφια, Ανθρωπος. Ad Autolyc. lib. ii. p. 106. Oxon. 1684.

word was used at first in no other sense, than that which it hath borne in later ages. The word hath not changed its original meaning; but in this, as in most of his assertions, Dr Priestley is confuted by his own authorities.

12. I feel no satisfaction in detecting the weaknesses of this learned writer's argument, but what arises from a consciousness, that it is a discharge of some part of the duty, which I owe to the church of God. It is a mortifying proof of the infirmity of the human mind, in the highest improvement of its faculties in the present life, that such fallacies in reasoning, such misconstructions of authorities, such distorted views of facts and opinions, should be found in the writings of a man, to whom, of all men of the present age, some branches of the experimental sciences are the most indebted.

V.

1. May I be permitted to close this long address, with a word of exhortation to the younger members of the priesthood.

2. The actual state of things is such, that, to the greater part of those who engage in it, our holy profession must furnish the means of a subsistence. The consequence is, that we are obliged to enter upon it in an early season of our lives, when it is well if we have previously laid a good foundation in our minds, of the very first principles of the doctrine of Christ: and a due proficiency in the theological studies, must be the attainment of future industry. To the novitiates therefore of our order, considered as unfinished theologians, I take the liberty to recommend the diligent study of the works of Bishop Bull; especially of his writings on the subject of the Trinity, with the annotations of Grabe, his

learned editor. In these, they will find an exact and critical detail, of the opinions of the fathers of the three first centuries. They will find the faith of the church of England confirmed, and proved to be the original faith, by a tradition, traced with certainty to the apostolick age. And they will find every argument refuted, which the Unitarian party have yet been able to form, upon their own views, of the opinions of the earliest ages.

3. The study of Bishop Bull, if leisure is not wanting, may be followed or accompanied with advantage, by that of the ecclesiastical historians; of the original historians, I mean, Eusebius, Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret. As for modern histories, the use of them, without a previous acquaintance with the ancient writers, is rather to be discouraged than recommended. By those who are already learned in the subject, they may be read indeed with emolument; as commentaries on the ancient text of history, as it lies in the original writers, which may occasionally throw light upon dark and doubtful questions. But, as books of elementary instruction for beginners, they will generally be pernicious; for it will too often be found to be the case, that the narrative is accommodated, not through premeditated fraud, but in the mere error of prejudice, either to the private opinions of the writer, or to the interests of his sect. Of this, Dr Priestley's work is a striking example. No work was perhaps ever sent abroad, under the title of a history, containing less of truth than his, in proportion to its volume.

4. From ecclesiastical history, the student learns what the faith of the church hath at all times been; and he is enabled to separate the pure doctrine of the

first age, from all later innovations : a matter at all times of the highest moment ; but of particular importance in the present juncture, when the whole ability and learning of the Unitarian party is exerted, to wrest from us the argument from tradition. The importance of the argument from tradition, rests upon the supposed infallibility of the first preachers. The opinion of their infallibility, rests upon the belief of their divine illumination. The consequence of a divine illamination is, that their whole doctrine must have been—not indeed obvious to the human understanding—not within the reach of its unassisted power to discover—but consonant to the highest reason, nor too difficult, when propounded, for the human apprehension ; and though not free from paradoxes, certainly not encumbered with contradictions. No tradition therefore may avail to prove, that any manifest contradiction; that a part, for instance, is equal to the whole, or that the same thing in the same respect, is at the same time one and many, was a part of the apostolick doctrine ; if the inspiration of the apostles be admitted. Or, if it should appear, from the evidence of a tradition which cannot reasonably be questioned, that the apostles really required the belief of contradictions under the name of mysteries ; their pretence to inspiration will be refuted, and the credit of their doctrine overturned. For as the evidence of intuition is far superior to that of sense ; no external evidence may establish the belief of a contradiction ; since no testimony that a contradiction is, should be allowed to overpower the intuitive conviction that it cannot be. An inquiry, therefore, into the reasonableness of our faith, as well as just views of its history, is of great importance.

5. The reasonableness of our faith will be best un-

derstood, from the writings of the fathers of the three first centuries. And among these, those wicked Platonists of the second age, who, in Dr Priestley's judgment, sowed the seeds of the antichristian corruption, deserve particular attention; for the great perspicuity with which, in general, they expound the faith, and the great ability with which they defend it. And as these corrupters, brought with them into the church the language of their school, (I say the language, for its opinions, except so far as they harmonized with the gospel, they had the ingenuity to retract,*) the writings of the Pagan philosophers, particularly the Platonists, will be of considerable use to the Christian student; as they will bring him more acquainted with a phraseology, which is used even by the Christian Platonists: nor for this purpose only, but for some degree of light which they will throw upon the argument. The error of the later Platonists was, that they warped the genuine doctrine of the original tradition, their Θειοπαραδοτος Θεολογια, to a form in which it might be in friendship with the popular idolatry. Their writings therefore are a mine, in which the true metal is, indeed, mingled with a dross of heterogeneous substances; but yet, the richness of the ore is such, as may well repay the cost and trouble of the separation. Or, if leisure should be wanting, for a minute study of a subject which may seem but of a secondary importance; it will at least be expedient, I had almost said it will be necessary, to know so much of the opinions of heathen antiquity, as is to be learned from those authentick documents, which the industry of the

* See the beginning of Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho; and Theoph. ad Autolyck, lib. ii.

indefatigable Cudworth hath collected and arranged, with great judgment, in his Intellectual System.

6. The advantage to be expected from these deep researches, is not any insight into the manner in which the three Divine Persons are united; a knowledge, which is indeed too high for man, perhaps for angels; which, in our present condition at least, is not to be attained, and ought not to be sought; but that just apprehension of the Scripture doctrine, which will show that it is not one of those things that "no miracles can prove,"* will be the certain fruit of the studies recommended. They will lead us to see the Scripture doctrine in its true light: that it is an imperfect discovery, not a contradiction. That the Catholick faith is not properly compared with the tale of Mahomet's journey to the third heaven; his conferences there, while the pitcher of water fell; or even with the doctrine of transubstantiation:† that even the Athanasian creed, is something very different from, a set "of contradictions the most direct which any person, the most skilled in logick, might draw up"‡—a censure, which could hardly have fallen from our learned adversary, Unitarian as he is, had he but known so common a book as Dr Waterland's History and Paraphrase. In the opinions of the Pagan Platonists, we have in some degree an experimental proof, that this abstruse doctrine cannot be the absurdity, which it seems to those who misunder-

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* "They are things which no miracles can prove," says Dr Priestley, in his Address to Mr Gibbon, speaking of the doctrines of the Trinity, and the Atonement. See Hist. of Corrup. vol. ii. p. 861.

† Hist. of Corrup. vol. ii. p. 461.

‡ Ibid. vol. i. p. 87.

stand it. Would Plato, would Porphyry, would even Plotinus, have believed the miracles of Mahomet, or the doctrine of transubstantiation? But they all believed a doctrine, which, so far at least, resembles the Nicene, as to be loaded with the same, or greater objections. By every one, who will thus combine the studies of divinity and philosophy, the truth of Plato's observation, I am persuaded, will be soon experienced: that, to those who apply themselves to these speculations, with a humble disposition to be taught, rather than with the unphilosophical and irreligious habit, of deciding hastily upon the first view of difficulties; what at first appeared the most incredible, will, in the end, seem the most evident and certain; and maxims, which seemed at first indisputable, will be discarded.*

7. An extensive erudition in Pagan, as well as Christian antiquity, joined with a critical understanding of the sacred text; is that which hath so long enabled the clergy of the church of England, to take the lead among Protestants, as the apologists of the apostolick faith and discipline; and to baffle the united strength of their adversaries, of all denominations. God forbid, that through an indolence, which would be unpardonable, we should ever lose the superiority which we have so long maintained. The acquisition of learning is indeed laborious, but the fruit is sweet. The private satisfaction that it must give, to every minister of the church of England, to understand, that his engagements to the establishment, are perfectly consistent with his higher obligations to God and Christ; is alone sufficient, to

* Plato in Epist. ad Dionys.

repay the labour of the studies, which afford this comfortable conviction, and contribute to its daily growth. But private satisfaction is not the end of our pursuits. The nobler end is publick edification. It is a maxim of Dr Priestley's, that every man, who in his conscience dissents from the established church, is obliged in conscience to be a declared dissenter. I honour the generosity of the sentiment.

——————— φιλον εἰη
φλιειν· πόλι δ' ἐχθρον, ἀ-
τ' ἐχθρος ἐων. λυκοιο δικαν ὑποδδυσομαι,
Αλλ' ἀλλοῖε παῖεων, ὁδοις σκολιαις——

It ought, much more, to be the sentiment of every one who stands with the received doctrine,—to be a declared churchman. If he would reap any solid advantage from the purity of his faith, he must be an open and avowed believer; lest, if he confess not Christ, his God and Saviour, before men, he should not be at last confessed before the angels of heaven. If this confession be the general duty of every man, who feels conviction; it is the particular duty of every man, who hath been called to the evangelist's office. He holds the authority of his commission for no other purpose, but to be a witness of the truth. A conviction that it is the truth, founded on a deep investigation of the subject, will supply him with firmness, to persevere in the glorious attestation, unawed by the abilities of his antagonists, undaunted by obloquy, unmoved by ridicule: which seem to be the trials which God hath appointed, instead of persecution, in the present age, to prove the sincerity and patience of the faithful. The advocate of that

sound form of words, which was originally delivered to the saints, hath to expect that his opinions will be the open jest of the Unitarian party: that his sincerity will be called in question: or, if "a bare *possibility* of his being in earnest"* be charitably admitted, the misfortune of his education will be lamented, and his prejudices deplored. All this insult will not alarm nor discompose him. He will rather glory in the recollection, that his adherence to the faith of the first ages hath provoked it. The conviction, which he will all the while enjoy, that his philosophy is Plato's and his creed St John's, will alleviate the mortification he might otherwise feel in differing from Dr Priestley: nor suffer him to think the evil insupportable, although the consequence of this dissent, should be, that he must share with the excellent Bishop of Worcester, in Dr Priestley's "pity and indignation."† Not indeed that he will hold any good man's good opinion cheap; or esteem it a light evil, that a conscientious attachment to the truth, should embroil him with those, whose talents he will revere, and whose virtues he will love. But he will esteem it but a temporary evil: an evil which providence, in mercy, hath appointed for the trial of his faith, and the improvement of his habits of disinterested obedience: an evil, therefore, which the spirit of a Christian will support; suffering neither the misfortune to deject, nor the injury to irritate. Adoring the wisdom of that myste-

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* Hist. of Corrup. vol. ii. p. 471.

† "To see such men as Bishop Hurd in this class of writers, (the defenders of the establishment,) when he is qualified to class with Tillotson, Hoadley, and Clarke; equally excites one's pity and indignation." Hist. of Corrup. vol. ii. p. 471.

rious dispensation, which, to heighten human virtue, ordains that it should often miss the reward, which disinterested virtue ever covets most; of that dispensation, which makes even error and rash judgment, a useful part of the discipline of the present life: he will not disgrace the cause which he should support, by any uncharitable conclusions concerning the actual motives, or the future doom, of those whose opinions he may think it his duty to oppose. Nor, in the necessary asperity of debate, will he hastily retaliate their unjust aspersions. He will admit much more than a possibility, that Dr Priestley may be in earnest in all his misinterpretations of the Scriptures and the fathers, and in all his misrepresentations of facts. Appearances to the contrary, however strong, he will refer to the fascinating power of prejudice, and to the delusive practice of *looking through* authors,* which the historian of religious opinions ought to have read. Though truth, in these controversies, can be only on one side; he will indulge, and he will avow, the charitable opinion, that sincerity may be on both. And he will enjoy the reflection, that by an equal sincerity, through the power of that blood, which was shed equally for all, both parties may at last find equal mercy. In the transport of this holy hope, he will anticipate that glorious consummation, when faith shall be absorbed in knowledge; and the fire of controversy for ever quenched. When the same generous zeal for God and truth, which too often, in this

* "I have taken a good deal of pains to read, or at least, look carefully through many of the most capital works of the ancient Christian writers." Dr Priestley's Preface, p. xvii.

world of folly and confusion, sets those at widest variance, whom the similitude of virtuous feelings should the most unite—shall be the cement of an indissoluble friendship; when the innumerable multitude of all nations, kindreds, and people, (why should I not add of all sects and parties,) assembled round the throne, shall, like the first Christians, be of one soul and one mind, giving praise, with one consent, to Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb that was slain, to redeem them by his blood.

APPENDIX.

While these sheets were in preparation for the press Dr Priestley was challenged by a writer in the Monthly Review, for June, (who the critick may be, I know not—he appears to be learned in ecclesiastical history; and I am well pleased to find, that his views of Dr Priestley's argument, in many particulars, agree with mine,) Dr Priestley was challenged by this writer, to point out the particular passages in Origen's writings in which he had conceived an acknowledgment of the identity of the Nazarenes and the Ebionites to be contained. Dr Priestley's Reply hath already made its appearance; in which he is reduced to the necessity of confessing, that he hath no such passage to produce.* Still, however, he maintains, that the identity of these sectaries, although not acknowledged by Origen, is to be inferred from Origen, Epiphanius, and Eusebius.† But

* See Dr Priestley's Reply to the Monthly Review, p. 5.

† See Corrections and Additions, &c. at the end of the Reply.

this is still affirmed, without reference to the particular passages, either of Origen or of Eusebius, from which the inference is to be drawn: nor is the reader informed, in which of Origen's works that *description* is to be found, of the opinions of the Ebionites, which represents them as the same opinions which others ascribe to the Nazarenes; and makes it appear, that Origen had no idea of any difference between the two sects.* Dr Priestley makes a reference indeed to the 13th tract of Origen's Commentary upon St Matthew's Gospel;† but this is for another purpose: for proof, of what needs indeed no proof at all,—that the Ebionites were of two sorts; the one admitting, the other denying, the miraculous conception, while both rejected the divinity of the Redeemer. What proof of this secondary proposition is to be found, in the 13th of the Exegeticks upon St Matthew's Gospel, I know not. I suspect an error of the press; and that the reference should have been to the 16th of the Exegeticks, in the 3rd section, which treats of the cure of the blind near Jericho. In that transaction, as St Mark relates it, Origen imagines, that the two divisions of the primitive church, the Gentiles and the Jewish converts, are allegorized. Jericho is the world—The multitudes which follow our Lord from Jericho, are the converts from Paganism to the true faith; who forsake the world, to follow Christ—The blind beggar is a half-converted Jew, addicted to the Ebionæan heresy; whose eyes are at last opened to the truth of the gospel. If this be not the reference

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* Reply, p. 5.

† See the References, p. 4, of the Reply.

which Dr Priestley meant to make, let me advise him to adopt it in the emended edition of his work, which he seems to promise. Besides that, the very purport of the exposition, which places the characteristick distinction between the Gentile and the Jew convert, in a belief or disbelief of Christ's divinity, may seem to militate strongly for his favourite opinion, that the whole Hebrew church was Unitarian; he will find one sentence in particular in this discourse, or a part at least of one sentence, which, I am persuaded, he will think worthy to be written in characters of gold. Και ἐπαν ἰδης των ἀπο Ιυδαιων πιστευοντων εἰς τον Ιησουν την περι τυ σωτηρος πιστιν, ὁτε μεν ἐκ Μαριας καὶ Ιωσηφ διομενων αὐτον ἐιναι, ὁτε μην ἐκ Μαριας μονης και τυ Θειυ πνευματος, ὑ μην και μετα της περι αὐτυ θεολογιας, ὁψει κ. τ. λ. —— "—— and when you consider, what belief they of the Jewish race who believe in Jesus, entertain of the Redeemer; some thinking that he took his being from Mary and Joseph, some indeed from Mary only and the Divine Spirit, but still without any belief of his divinity; you will understand, &c." These expressions, taken by themselves, may seem to intimate, that the sect of the Ebionites, in its two great branches, embraced, in the time of Origen, the whole body of the Hebrew Christians. But let the learned reader attentively peruse the whole discourse; let him consider well the subject and the style; and he will perceive, that as the subject is not history, neither is the style of the sedate historick kind. The object of the discourse is to *spiritualize* a plain story: an attempt, in which the imagination of the writer is always busier than the judgment: and the style, even in allusion to historical facts, is generally rather warm than exact; and is apt to border on the vehement and the exagge-

rated. This is in some degree the case in this discourse of Origen's. His expressions are therefore to be interpreted, by the known tenor of ecclesiastical history: ecclesiastical history is not to be accommodated to his expressions. That the Jewish converts were remarkably prone to the Ebionæan heresy, from which the Gentile churches in general were pure, is the most that can be concluded from this passage, strengthened as it might be with another, somewhat to the same purpose, in the Commentaries upon St John's Gospel. But what if it were proved, that the whole sect of the Nazarenes was absorbed in the Ebionæan heresy in the days of Origen? What evidence would that afford of the identity of the Nazarenes and the Ebionites, in earlier times? And even that identity, if it were proved, what evidence would it afford, that the church of Jerusalem had been originally Unitarian, under her first bishops of the circumcision?

2. But however indecisive the pretended testimony of Origen may be, Dr Priestley makes himself very sure that Epiphanius is on his side. "Epiphanius expressly says, that Ebion held the same opinion with the Nazarenes.*" The only inference to be made from this assertion, is this: that Dr Priestley hath never troubled himself to read more of Epiphanius's account of the Ebionites, than the first eleven words of the first sentence. Had he read the first sentence to the end, he would have found that Ebion, although he arose from the school of the Nazarenes, and held similar opinions, preached also other doctrines, of which he was the first

* Reply, p. 4.

inventor. Among these novelties, by the consent of all antiquity, though not with Dr Priestley's leave, we place the mere humanity of Christ, with or without the miraculous conception.

3. Still Dr Priestley triumphs in the silence of Hegesippus, and the concessions of Justin Martyr. It were not difficult, to show the insufficiency of his Reply to the learned reviewer of his work, upon both these articles: but I forbear to put my sickle into another's harvest. But that it may not be thought strange, that these cogent arguments should have been suffered to pass unnoticed in my own animadversions, and that the omission may not be imputed to the wrong cause; it seems proper to declare the true reason of it, which was this: I wished to confine my strictures to those arguments, in which the learned author seemed to me the most original. In these two he is the least so. Both are stale. The one is from Zuicker's mint; the other from Episcopius. Both have been canvassed with great accuracy, and both have been effectually overturned, by that excellent Divine whom I have so often found occasion to mention, and who never must be mentioned without praise, the learned and pious Bishop Bull.

LETTERS

FROM THE

ARCHDEACON OF ST ALBAN'S,

IN

REPLY

TO DR PRIESTLEY.

LETTERS,

&c.

LETTER FIRST.

The Archdeacon of St Alban's declines a regular controversy with Dr Priestley.—Produces new instances of Dr Priestley's inaccuracies and misrepresentations.

DEAR SIR,

WHEN, at the request of the Clergy of my archdeaconry, I published the discourse, in which I had given them my thoughts of your late attack on the doctrine of the Trinity; it was not at all my intention to open a regular controversy with you upon the subject. I cannot think, that you have read my publication with so little discernment, as not to perceive in it, a design of quite another kind; which yet, I fear, I shall find it difficult to avow in explicit terms, without giving an offence, which, were it possible, I would avoid. But since you challenge me to a contest, in which it is my resolution never to engage; not from any distrust of my own cause, nor from any dread of the abilities by which

I should be opposed; but from a persuasion, that a controversy, in which so little new is to be said on either side, could not terminate in the satisfaction of either party; it is necessary, that both yourself and the publick should be made to understand, upon what grounds I conceive myself at liberty to decline a discussion, to which you seem to think me pledged: and for this purpose, I must declare in very plain language, what I would rather have left you to collect; that my original attack upon your history was such, as to lay me under no obligation to prosecute the argument. My attack was not so much upon the opinions, which you maintain, however I may hold them in abhorrence, as upon the credit of your narrative: and if I have succeeded in overthrowing that, which the judgment of the learned must decide, I am not at all obliged to go into new arguments upon the main question. The objections, which were brought against you in my Charge, all went to the proof of this single proposition.—That, on which ever side the truth may lie in the Trinitarian controversy—I have no doubt on which it lies; but the footing, upon which I put the dispute with you, leaves me at liberty to suppose the matter doubtful; with whatever metaphysical difficulties the Catholick doctrine may be encumbered—those difficulties, when the doctrine is rightly apprehended, are in my judgment not great, but I will allow you to say they are insuperable: whatever ambiguity may be pretended in the expressions of holy writ, in which the Divinity of the Son is generally supposed to be asserted; in the greater part of the texts, I perceive no ambiguity, but you may assume, if you please, that not one of them renders a certain meaning: whatever variety and disagreement is to be found in the

orthodoxy of different ages—for the three first centuries the opinion of the church upon this point was uniform, but I give you leave to suppose it as unstable as the world of Heraclitus: whatever may be the intrinsick difficulty of the doctrine of the Trinity, however deficient the proof of it from holy writ, and however discordant the opinions of different ages; still I affirm, and the proof of this was the whole object of my Charge, that Dr Priestley, great as his attainments are confessed to be in the profane sciences, is altogether unqualified to throw any light upon a question of ecclesiastical antiquity.

2. If the instances, which I have alleged of misinformation and inaccuracy, are only secondary oversights, such as affect not the main argument, and are incident to the best writers in undertakings of such extent as yours; the attempt to depreciate a work of merit, by uncandid censure, must redound to my own disgrace. But whoever will take the trouble to compare your work and mine, will find, that with all the illiberal zeal which you ascribe to me, I was not disposed to cavil about trifles—I fear it will be rather found, that I have erred in the opposite extreme; and, lest I should seem too much inclined to censure, have passed over many inaccuracies, which ought to have been pointed out.

3. Such, for instance, is your inversion of the order of succession of the Roman pontiffs: when you mention Victor as the successor of the bishop who came after him.*

4. Such is your assertion,† that in the age of Tertul-

* Hist. of Corrup. vol. i. p. 19.
† Ibid. p. 61.

lian, it was not pretended "that the subject of the Trinity was above human comprehension;" when but a few pages back* you had produced a passage from Irenæus, in which the generation of the Son, which is a part only of the subject, is mentioned as so wonderful a thing, as to be understood by none "except the Father, who begat, and the Son, who is begotten."

5. Such is your misrepresentation of the opinion of Valesius, concerning the cause of the loss of Hegesippus's history. Valesius, you say, "was of opinion, that the history of Hegisippus was neglected and lost by the ancients, because it was observed to favour the Unitarian doctrine."† Valesius hath indeed expressed an opinion, that the work of Hegesippus was neglected by the ancients, on account of errors which it contained: but what the errors might be, which might occasion this neglect, is a point upon which Valesius is silent—and what right have you to suppose, that the Unitarian doctrine was the error which Valesius ascribed to Hegesippus, more than to Clemens Alexandrinus, upon whose lost work of the Hypotyposes he passes the same judgment?‡

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* Hist. of Corrup. vol. i. p. 37.

† Ibid. p. 9.

‡ Dr Priestley, in the nineteenth of his Second Letters, to extricate himself from this question, endeavours to prove, that the Unitarian doctrines are the only errors that can with probability be ascribed to Hegesippus, in his lost work; and that Clemens Alexandrinus, though he was himself no Unitarian, might, for ought any one now knows to the contrary, have said things in favour of Unitarians, in his lost work of the Hypotyposes. But whatever proof Dr Priestley may be able to make out, that Hegesippus was an Unitarian, and that Clemens Alexandrinus spoke favourably of Unitarians, still I complain, that he alleges the authority of Valesius for more than Velesius himself affirms: and I maintain, that this inaccuracy, (for I have called it in this instance by no

6. Such another inaccuracy, to use no harsher word, is your appeal to the testimony of Epiphanius, in favour of Noetus; to prove that he was wronged by his adversaries, when he was accused of the Patripassian heresy. Noetus's confession, according to Epiphanius, was this: "that he acknowledged one God, who was begotten, who suffered and died." But suppressing, or in your *rapid glances* having not observed, the latter part of this acknowledgement, asserting the sufferings and death of his one God; you produce Epiphanius as an evidence, that—"Noetus was simply an Unitarian, declaring upon all occasions with great boldness, that he neither knew nor worshipped any God but one."* (+) Having thus vindicated the injured character of Noetus, you proceed to inform your readers, how it came to pass, that the Unitarians of that age fell under the imputation of the Patripassian error.

7. Such another inaccuracy we have, in your relation of the judgment, which the Roman Dionysius passed upon certain injudicious antagonists of Sabellius: who, to avoid his error, divided the Holy Trinity into three persons *unrelated* to each other, and distinct *in all respects.* Εἰς τρεις ὑποστασεις, ξενας ἀλληλων, πανταπασι κεχωρισμενας, διαιρημενας την ἁγιαν τριαδα. These are the

worse name,) in the allegation of authorities, is a circumstance that ought to lessen his credit as an historian.

* Hist. of Corrup. vol. i. p. 74.

(+) In the nineteenth of his Second Letters, Dr Priestley acknowledges that he ought not to have exempted Epiphanius from the impropriety of charging Noetus with the Patripassian heresy. But he says, "this like the former," the misquotation of Valesius, "is a circumstance of little consequence to the main argument." Dr Priestley forgets, that the main argument with him and with me goes to different points. His point, is the antiquity and the truth of the Unitarian doctrine. Mine is, Dr Priestley's incompetency in the subject which he pretends to treat.

words, in which Athanasius states the opinion, which Dionysius censures; and the censure of Dionysius upon this opinion, Athanasius quotes with approbation, as well indeed he might, for the opinion of three persons in the Godhead, *unrelated to each other, and distinct in all respects,* is rank Tritheism; because, what are unrelated and distinct in all respects, are many in all respects; and being many in all respects, cannot in any respect be one. But in your translation of the passage, by omitting the very significant adjective ξενας, and the very emphatical adverb παντάπασι, you leave hardly any difference between the opinion which Dionysius censured, and the Catholick faith, which Athanasius maintained: and thus you procure yourself a fine opportunity of introducing an oblique sarcastick stroke at Athanasius, for concurring in a censure upon his own opinions. "Some persons, in opposing Sabellius, having made three hypostases, which we render persons, separate from each other; Dionysius, bishop of Rome, quoted with approbation by Athanasius himself, said, that it was making three Gods."* Surely, truth, candour, and consistency, are conspicuous in the writings of our modern Unitarians; and the Archdeacon of St Alban's is the only writer of the age, who deals in sarcasms!

8. These, and other inaccuracies, which might have been remarked without any impeachment of my candour, and with advantage to my argument, I suffered to pass unnoticed. I chose to rest the strength of my attack, rather on the importance, than the variety, of the matter of complaint. If the instances of mistake, which

* Hist. of Corrup. vol. i. p. 65

I have alleged, be few in number, yet if they are singly too considerable in size, to be incident to a well-informed writer; if they betray a want of that general comprehension of your subject, which might enable you to draw the true conclusions from the passages you cite; if they prove you incompetent in the very language of the writers, from which your proofs should be drawn; unskilled in the philosophy, whose doctrines you pretend to compare with the opinions of the church; a few clear instances, of errors of this enormous size, may release me from the task which you would impose upon me, of canvassing every part of your argument, and of replying to every particular quotation. A writer, of whom it is once proved that he is ill-informed upon his subject, hath no right to demand a further hearing. It is a fair presumption against the truth of his conclusion, be it what it may, that it cannot be right, but by mere accident. To be right by accident, will rarely happen to any man in any subject; because in all subjects truth is single, and error infinite.

9. Not long since, I was consulted about a new opinion concerning the actual figure of the earth. I objected, that while the basis of the author's argument was an assumption, that the figure of the meridian is an ellipsis; in his inquiry after the particular species of the ellipsis, he had assigned properties to the curve of the earth's meridian, which the known nature of the ellipsis would not admit. I was challenged to prove a certain relation, which I asserted, between the rays of curvature in different parts of the curve—to prove the curvature at the second, less than at the principal vertex—and at last I was challenged, to prove the property from which the ellipsis takes its name. Was I to blame,

that I broke off the conference—that I refuse to contemplate another scheme, or to examine another computation?

10. Pardon me, Sir, if plain dealing compels me to profess, that I think little less respectfully of this philosopher's learning in the conicks, than of your attainments in ecclesiastical history. I make this avowal with the less hesitation, because I find my opinion in some measure justified by your own confessions. You confess, that my late publication first brought you acquainted with the very name of Daniel Zuicker: that from me you have received your first information of the concessions of Episcopius; and the first notice of the coincidence of your own opinions, concerning the Platonizing fathers of the second century, with those of Petavius and Huetius: that you had never in your life *looked through* the writings of Bishop Bull, till my frequent references to them excited your curiosity; as they gave you to understand, what before you had never known, that the author is in high esteem with the clergy of the establishment. What is this but to confess, that you are indeed little read in the principal writers, either on your own side of the question or the opposite? But as no man, I presume, is born with an intuitive knowledge of the opinions or the facts of past ages, the historian of Religious Corruptions, confessing himself unread in the polemical divines, confesses ignorance of his subject. The opinion therefore which I formed, upon a diligent perusal of your work, is confirmed by your own acknowledgments; and my victory is already so complete, that I might well decline any further contest.

11. My alarms (if I ever felt alarm) for the Catholick faith, or for the national establishment, as in danger

from your attacks, must now be laid asleep; and will be no incentive to any very vigorous exertions against a prostrate enemy.* But the truth is, that I never was alarmed, and it is necessary that I should set you right in that point. When I spake of your extraordinary attempt, to unsettle faith, and to break up establishments,† I spake of the end to which your wishes seem to be carried, not of an event which I thought likely to ensue. The utmost danger that I feared, was of an inferior kind: a present danger, not to the church, but to the more unwary of her members, who might be misled by the justly celebrated name of Dr Priestley: a future danger to myself, if I forbore to bear my witness to the truth. For although we have a promise, that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church, yet the vigilence of the priesthood, I conceive to be the ordinary means, which God hath provided for its security. I therefore thought it my duty, to prevent the mischief which might arise to the unlearned and unstable, by demolishing the credit of your narrative, and in these subjects, the authority of your name.

12. The letters which you have lately addressed to me, give me no reason to alter my opinion or retract my accusation. They only fix me in the persuasion, that to prosecute the dispute with you, would be to little purpose. You will therefore excuse me, if I decline a controversy, to be carried on, for such I understand to be the conditions of the challenge, "till you shall have

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* —"you seem to have taken a particular alarm—I hope you will exert yourself with proportionable vigour——to save a falling state." Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 2.

† Charge, sec. 3.

nothing left, which you may think of consequence to allege."* When I have shown the insufficiency of the defence which you have now set up, and have collected the new specimens of your historical abilities, which this new publication supplies in great abundance, whatever more you may find to say upon the subject, in me you will have no antagonist.

I am &c.

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* Preface to Letters, p. iii. and xviii.

LETTER SECOND.

A recapitulation of the Archdeacon's Charge.

DEAR SIR,

IF I could adopt your heroick plan, of writing on till I should have nothing left to say, our correspondence would run to an enormous size: for I should have more than a single remark to make, upon almost every sentence of every one of your Ten Letters. But as we both write for the edification of the publick, and yet few, I fear, will be disposed to give a long or a close attention to our subject, the ease of our readers, if we mean to be read, must be consulted. You, I am told, in defiance of your bookseller's sage counsels, despise such considerations; but they will have their weight with me: I shall be unwilling, either to fatigue by the length, or to perplex by the intricacy or obscurity of my reasoning. To avoid the first miscarriage, I shall be content to give you a sufficient, rather than a full reply; and to avoid the second, I shall endeavour so to frame my argument, that my readers may perceive the force of it, without the trouble and interruption, of frequent recourse to our former publications. For this purpose, I shall begin with a recapitulation of the substance of my Charge; that, before I enter upon particular discussions, the points to be disputed may be brought at once in view.

2. The general argument of my charge, was a critical review of your History, in that part of it which relates

to the doctrine of the Trinity in the three first ages. This review consisted of two parts: a summary of the account, which you pretend to give, of the rise and progress of the Trinitarian doctrine; and a view of the evidence, by which your narrative is supported, consisting of nine select specimens, of the particular proofs of which the body of that evidence is composed.

3. Of your account of the rise and progress of the Trinitarian doctrine, I said in general, that it is nothing new; that it is in all its essential parts, the same which was propagated by the Unitarian writers of the last century, and, upon its first appearance, refuted by divines of the church of England. Your answer to this part of my Charge, is, as I have already had occasion to observe, complete. You repel the imputation of plagiarism, by the most disgraceful confession of ignorance, to which foiled polemick ever was reduced. To this part of your defence I have nothing to reply.

4. To your evidence, I made the same general objection, that it is destitute of novelty; consisting of proofs long since set up, and long since confuted: that if you have attempted any thing new, it is only to confirm the gratuitous assumptions of former Unitarians, by inconclusive arguments, and false quotations. The nine specimens of your proofs, by which this heavy accusation was supported, were nothing less, than your principal arguments, in support of your three fundamental assertions: that the primitive church was simply Unitarian; that our Lord's divinity was an innovation of the second century; and that the innovation was made by the Platonizing Fathers. If your principal arguments were fairly adduced, as instances of weak, insufficient proof, your whole notion of the gradual progress of opinions,

from the Unitarian doctrine to the Arian, and from the Arian to the Nicene faith, is overthrown. Of this you have shown yourself not insensible, by the great pains which you have taken, to what purpose will soon appear, to answer my objections.

5. The nine specimens of insufficient proof were these.

6. Two instances of the circulating syllogism. The first, when you allege your own sense of Scripture as the clear sense, in proof of your pretended fact, that the primitive faith was Unitarian; whereas the fact must be first proved, before your particular interpretation can be admitted. The second when, in like manner, you allege the pretended silence of St John about the error of the Unitarians; in proof, that the Unitarian doctrine is no error, but the very truth of the gospel. The assumption, that St. John is silent upon this subject in his first epistle, is gratuitous and disputable. It rests upon a particular interpretation of St John's expression, that "Christ is come in the flesh," which will be admitted by none, who are not previously convinced that St John's own faith was Unitarian. If St John's faith was Unitarian, the phrase that "Christ is come in the flesh," signifies only, that Christ was a man; and thus, we shall find no censure of the Unitarian doctrine in St John's first epistle. But if St John was no Unitarian, but a believer in the incarnation and divinity of our Lord; then, the phrase of Christ's coming in the flesh, cannot but be understood to allude to both these articles, as parts of the true faith; and, alluding to both these articles as parts of the true faith, it conveys a censure upon the Unitarian doctrine in every form. The assumption therefore, of St John's silence

concerning the Unitarian doctrine, presumes another fact, that St John was himself an Unitarian. This is the primary, though tacit assumption, on which this argument is built. This argument therefore, fairly analyzed, is found to circulate like the former: for the conclusion to be established, is the pretended fact, that the faith of the primitive church was Unitarian—the mean of proof is the gratuitous assumption, that the faith of St John was Unitarian. But to assume the faith of an inspired apostle, is the same thing as to assume the faith of the primitive church.

7. My third specimen, was an instance, in which you cite a testimony which no where exists. The pretended testimony is of no less a person than Athanasius. The fact, to which Athanasius is made to depose, is the high antiquity of the Unitarian faith. His testimony to this fact, you find in his piece upon the orthodoxy of the Alexandrine Dionysius; in a certain passage in which he affirms, that the Jews were firmly persuaded that the Messiah was to be a mere man; and alleges, as you understand him, this persuasion of the Jews, as an apology for a caution used by the apostles, in divulging the doctrine of our Lord's divinity. The Jews of whom Athanasius speaks, you preposterously imagine were Christians, the first converts from Judaism. Whereas, he speaks of plain downright Jews; and what you take for his apology for caution in the apostles, is in truth a commendation of the sagacity which they displayed, in a judicious arrangement of the matter of their doctrine.

8. My fourth specimen, was your capital argument for the antiquity of the Unitarian faith, founded on the opinions of the Nazarenes: this argument, I maintain to be lame and impotent in every part. It is built upon

two assumptions, of which the one is a mere gratuitous assertion, of which no proof is attempted; the other is accompanied with a pretended proof, which arises however, from a forged testimony, and an ill-founded assertion. The gratuitous assumption is, that the Nazarenes and the Hebrew Christians, were the same people; whereas the fact is, that the sect of the Nazarenes, arose after the extinction of the proper church of Jerusalem. The other assumption is, that the faith of these Nazarenes was Unitarian. This is proved by the testimony of Epiphanius, and by an assumption, that the Nazarenes and the Ebionites were the same. This assertion is unfounded, and the testimony of Epiphanius is in fact forged; since it is drawn by torture from his words. Indeed, it is not pretended to be more than this; that Epiphanius makes no mention "that the Nazarenes believed in the divinity of Christ;" and this no-mention is only his confession, that he was totally uninformed, whether they believed the divinity of Christ, or not. Were both these assumptions true, the argument would be complete. Both are false: and were either singly true, yet the other being false, the conclusion would be either the reverse of your's, or altogether precarious.

9. My fifth specimen, was your misrepresentation of Eusebius, whom you charge with inconsistency, because another writer who is quoted by him, speaks of Theodotus, who appeared about the year 190, as the first who held that our Saviour was a mere man; when, in refuting the pretentions of the Unitarians to antiquity, he goes no further back than to Irenæus and Justin Martyr; although the writings of Eusebius himself afford a refutation of the assertion. But although the assertion, as you choose to understand it, would be liable to refu-

tation from the writings of Eusebius; it admits an interpretation, by which the seeming inconsistency is entirely removed. The pretentions to antiquity, which it was incumbent upon Eusebius, or the author quoted by him, to refute, were not simply pretensions to antiquity, but to a prior antiquity: and in refuting these, the author quoted by Eusebius, goes back to the apostolick age.

10. Your objection to the doctrine of the church, drawn from the resemblance which you find between the Christian and the Platonick doctrine, furnished my sixth specimen of insufficient proof. I acknowledge the resemblance; but I insist, that it leads to an inquiry into the sentiments of heathen antiquity, which, pursued to its just consequences, rather corroborates than invalidates, the traditional evidence of the Catholick faith.

11. Your proofs of your second assertion, that the doctrine of our Lord's divinity was an innovation of the second age, are all of an oblique and secondary kind: such as, were they liable to no other objection, would lead to no conclusion, without a distinct previous proof, that the faith of the first age was Unitarian. One of these arguments furnished my seventh specimen of insufficient proof: it is an instance, in which you cite the testimony of a Greek writer, to prove the very reverse of what he says—it is alleged by me as an instance of your competency in the Greek language in general, and of your particular acquaintance with the phraseology of the early fathers.

12. My eighth specimen, was taken from your attempt to translate a passage of Athenagoras, at which an abler philologer than you have shown yourself to be, unread in the Platonists, might be allowed to stumble.

I produced it, to convict you of incompetency in the language of the Platonists; and to confirm a suspicion, which the very tenor of your third assertion might create, that you are ignorant of the genuine doctrines of the Platonick school. Whence it is to be inferred, that you are little to be trusted, when you take upon you to compare the opinions of the first Christians, in which you are not learned, with Platonism, in which you are a child.

13. My ninth specimen was another instance of your skill in the Greek language. A passage of Theophilus, in which he expounds the word Trinity, by Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is produced by you to prove, that the use of the word Trinity, to denote Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, was unknown to Theophilus. Theophilus's words are so very clear, that the sense was hardly to be missed, at first sight, by a school boy in his second year of Greek.

14. These are the nine specimens, by which I support my general Charge of the inaccuracy of your narrative; and in these subjects, the insufficiency of its author. To all of them, except the seventh and ninth, you have attempted to reply. With what success is to be considered.

I am, &c.

LETTER THIRD.

In Reply to Dr Priestley's introductory, and to part of his first Letter.—His defence of his argument from the clear sense of Scripture, confuted.—Of the argument against our Lord's preexistence, to be drawn from the materiality of man.—Of the Greek pronoun ὑτος.

DEAR SIR,

TO remove the imputation of having argued in a circle, when alleging your own sense of Scripture as the clear sense, you infer, that the faith of the first ages was exactly conformable to your own opinions; you tell me, that the clear sense of Scripture, and the historical evidence, are collateral proofs* of the early prevalence of the Unitarian faith—I shall admit this, and shall retract all that I have written, when once you shall have proved to the satisfaction of the Christian world, that the Unitarian doctrine is delivered in the holy Scriptures, taken in their plain and obvious meaning. But while your sense of Scripture is disallowed by the majority of Christians, I must still contend, that you have no right to call it the clear sense; and that any argument built on a supposition, that the Scriptures speak a sense not generally perceived in them, rests at best upon a gratui-

* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 4—6.

tous assumption. I confess, that an argument drawn from a gratuitous assumption, is not necessarily an argument running in a circle, unless the only means of reducing the assumption to a certainty, be a previous proof of the conclusion to be drawn: but this, I affirm to be the case in the instance under consideration. When we speak of the clear sense of any piece of writing, this very expression admits a twofold interpretation. The clear sense, may be either that which is clearly conveyed in the words; or a sense, which though it be not clearly conveyed in the words, may be clearly proved, from the context, or from other considerations, to be the sense which was really present to the mind of the writer. If you allege the clear sense of the Scriptures, in the first sense of the expression, in proof that the primitive faith was Unitarian; I ask, whether it be not the sole end and purpose of the inquiry into the primitive faith, to settle the differences of Christians upon points, in which the Scriptures, if there be any ground in them for the disputes which have arisen, are not clear? You now assume a sense, which you call their clear sense, upon those very points, in order to ascertain the primitive faith. This is to reason in a circle.

2. But in truth, the Unitarian doctrine will never be proved to be the clear sense of Scripture, in the first sense of clearness. On the contrary, if ever it should be clearly proved to have been the sense of the sacred writers; the just conclusion will be, that of all writers, these have been the most unnecessarily, and the most wilfully obscure. The Unitarians themselves, pretend not that their doctrine is to be found in the plain literal sense of holy writ; on the contrary, they take the greatest pains to explain away the literal meaning. They

pretend, that the sacred writers delight in certain metaphors and images, which, however unnatural and obscure they may seem at this day, are supposed to have been of the genius of the eastern languages, and of consequence, familiar to the first Christians; who, in the greater part, were of Jewish extraction. By the help of these supposed metaphors, the Unitarian expositors contrive, to purge the Scripture of every thing which they disapprove, and make it the oracle, not of God's wisdom, but of their own fancies. When you therefore, as a Unitarian, say, that your doctrine is the clear sense of Scripture; which, according to the scheme of interpretation which you follow, hath no clear sense at all; you can only mean, that this doctrine may be clearly proved to be the sense intended by the inspired writers. Perhaps, in my Charge, I was too negligent in the interpretation of your expressions, when I pretended to expose the infirmity of your argument. Be it so. This then is your assertion. The Unitarian doctrine is clearly the true sense of Scripture. But where is the proof? You can bring no proof that will be generally convincing, unless you can find it in the faith of the apostolick ages. The faith of the first Christians, once clearly ascertained, must be allowed indeed to be an unerring exposition of the written word. To prove therefore, that the Unitarian doctrine is clearly the true sense of Scripture, which is your assumption, you must first prove that the primitive faith was Unitarian, which should be your conclusion. Still this argument circulates, and was not improperly alleged by me, as my first specimen of insufficient proof.

3. But it is of no great importance to dispute, where the particular infirmity of this argument may lie; when

you confess, that it is of such a sort, "that you could not suppose it would have any weight with Trinitarians."* While you condescend to employ your rare abilities, in framing arguments, which will persuade those only who are previously persuaded, you will do little harm. Why should I disturb you in this innocent amusement?

4. To compensate for the confessed inefficacy of this argument, you tell me of another, which you might have urged, to disprove not only the divinity, but the preexistence of our Lord; such an argument, it seems, might have been drawn "from the doctrine of the materiality of man, which has been sufficiently proved in your disquisitions on matter and spirit;"† in which, by an analogical proof, you have refuted the vulgar error of the immateriality of the human soul, and have in consequence, overthrown the whole system of preexistence. I believe, Sir, the opponents of the Unitarian scheme, will not be displeased to understand, that it is at last, to stand or fall with Dr Priestley's System of Materialism, and Dr Hartley's Theory of the Mind.

5. As a striking instance of the conformity, between the Unitarian doctrine and the clear sense of Scripture, I produced the initial sentences of St John's gospel; in which, you know, you find a clear refutation of the personality of the Logos: in rendering these sentences in English, I took occasion to remark, that the Greek pronoun ὅτος naturally renders a person. You tell me, "it may refer to any thing that is of the same gender, in

* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 5.
† Ibid.

the Greek language, whether it be a person or not."* I never meant to insinuate the contrary. Give me leave to refer you to a letter which was published in the Gentleman's Magazine, for November last, under the signature of PERHAPS: you will find it in my Appendix,† and I now declare myself the writer of it.

I am, &c.

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* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 7.

† Appendix, No. 1. and 2.

LETTER FOURTH.

In reply to Dr Priestley's first Letter.—His defence of his argument, from St John's first epistle, confuted.—The phrase "come in the flesh," more than equivalent to the word "to come."—St John's assertion, that "Christ came in the flesh." not paralled with St Paul's, that "he partook of flesh and blood."

DEAR SIR,

YOUR argument for the antiquity of the Unitarian doctrine, from St John's first epistle, the second among my specimens of insufficient proofs, rests on a supposition, that in that epistle, the Unitarian doctrine is not censured. I have shown,* that this supposition will stand or fall, according as one or another interpretation of the phrase of "coming in the flesh," shall be admitted. That single expression, as it is generally understood, reprobates the Unitarian doctrine, and overthrows your supposition. You must therefore establish your own sense of the phrase, before you can be permitted to assume, that St John is silent about the Unitarian doctrine. Now to make good this argument, you tell me, that "you think," and that "it is your opinion," that the phrase of "coming in the flesh," is merely an

* Charge, and Letter ii.

assertion of our Lord's humanity.* Sir, I understood from the first, that this is *your opinion*, and I doubt not in the least your firmness in it: but I contend, that no such authority belongs to your opinion, that the bare notification of it, should command the assent of the whole Christian world, in preference to other opinions, which have more generally prevailed. You must justify that opinion, if you would give any colour of plausibility to your argument; but the opinion cannot be justified, unless it might be previously assumed, that St John himself was an Unitarian. You will hardly say, that any believer in our Lord's divinity and incarnation, could employ the phrase of Christ's "coming in the flesh," without an allusion, in his own mind, to both those articles, as branches of the true faith. But such an allusion, implies a censure of the Unitarians. Till you shall have proved, therefore, that St John was an Unitarian, the phrase of "Christ's coming in the flesh" may be thought to contain a censure of the Unitarian tenets; and your opinion, that no censure of them is contained in St John's first epistle, will be disputable.

2. You say, that this phrase of coming in the flesh, "refers naturally to the doctrine of the Gnosticks."† I say the very same thing. But I say, that in the sense in which the church hath ever understood it, this phrase refers to two divisions of the Gnosticks: the Docetæ, and the Cerinthians; affirming a doctrine, which is the mean between their opposite errors. The Docetæ affirmed, that Jesus was not a man in reality, but in appearance only; the Cerinthians, that he was a

* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 8, 10.
† Ibid, p. 9.

mere man, under the tutelage of the Christ, a superangelick being, which was not so united to the man as to make one person. St John says, "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh;" that is, as the words have been generally understood, Jesus was a man, not in appearance only, as the Docetæ taught, but in reality; not a mere man, as the Cerinthians taught, under the care of a superangelick guardian, but Christ himself come in the flesh; the word of God incarnate. St John says, that whoever denies this complex proposition, is of antichrist. It surprises me, that you should find an improbability, upon the first face of the thing, in supposing, that the same expression should be equally levelled* at two heresies, which you confess to be opposite. For is it not always the case, that expressions which predicate a truth, lying in the middle between two opposite falsehoods, equally impugn both the false extremes? If I say, that when Fahrenheit's thermometer, in the open air, stands at 60° in the shade, the weather is mild; do I not equally deny that it is insufferably hot, or insufferably cold? "Gnosticism, you say, is certainly condemned by the apostle, but not the doctrine of the Ebionites, though it is allowed to have existed in his time."† The doctrine of the original Ebionites, and that of the Cerinthian Gnosticks, upon the point of Christ's divinity, was the same. If the apostle condemns the one, he condemns the other, whether he lived or lived not to see the rise of the Ebionæan sect.‡

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* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 10.

† Ibid.

‡ "You insist upon it," says Dr Priestley, in the fifth of his second Letters, "that John does censure the Unitarian doctrine: which is curious enough; when,

I shall hereafter have occasion to show, that the Ebionæan sect was of a later date than you imagine.

3. It is perhaps, from something of a secret misgiving, that your interpretation of the phrase of "coming in the flesh," will not be allowed to be its natural and obvious meaning; that you are so desirous to retreat, into the strong-hold of Jewish idioms. You think, the phrase in question "is similar to other Jewish phrases,"* which, you think, will be allowed to be merely expressive of humanity. I fear, Sir, it hath been the custom of late, to lay too much stress upon Jewish idioms, in the exposition of the didactick parts of the New Testament. The gospel is a general revelation.† If it is delivered in a style, which is not perspicuous to the illiterate of any nation except the Jewish; it is as much locked up from general apprehension, as if the sacred books had been written in the vernacular gibberish of the Jews of that age. The Holy Spirit, which directed the apostles and the evangelists to the use of the tongue, which in their day was the most generally understood—the Greek—would for the same reason, it

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according to your account, there were no Ebionites or Nazarenes; that is, none who denied the preexistence of Christ, till long after the time of John." But this is not *according to my account*. My account is, that Cerinthus, who was unquestionably contemporary with St John, denied our Lord's preexistence, and was in this point the precursor of the Ebionites. And what if I had said, that St John had censured a doctrine not taught till after his death? Do not the fathers perpetually refer to proleptick censures of late heresies in the sacred writings? Is no proleptick reprobation, of the late errors of the Roman church, to be found in St Paul's epistles?

* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 8.

† "The religion of Christ was an universal religion, and the doctrines of the gospel, were calculated for the western as well as the eastern hemisphere." See Mr Shepherd's Preface, to his *Free Examination of the Socinian exposition, of the prefatory verses of St John's gospel.*

may be presumed, suggest to them a style which might be generally perspicuous. It is therefore a principle with me, that the true sense of any phrase in the New Testament is, for the most part, what may be called its standing sense: that which will be the first to occur to common people of every country, and in every age: and I am apt to think, that the difference between this standing sense, and the Jewish sense will, in all cases, be far less than is imagined, or none at all; because, though different languages differ widely, in their refined and elevated idioms, common speech is, in all languages, pretty much the same.

4. But what are those Jewish phrases, with which you would compare the Jewish phrase of "coming in the flesh?" They are the word "to come," and the phrase "partaker of flesh and blood."

5. The word "to come," is used by metaphor, I believe, in all languages, to signify, either a man's birth, or first entrance into publick life. *He came into the world; he came into life; he came into business.* I have no where affirmed, that such phrases denote any thing more than human, in any person to whom they may be applied. But is the phrase "to come in the flesh," no more than equivalent to the word "to come?" Are the words in the flesh," mere expletives?—If they are not expletives, what is their import, but to limit the sense of the word, *to come*, to some particular manner of coming?—This limitation, either presumes a possibility of other ways of coming; or it is nugatory. But was it possible for a mere man to come otherwise than in the flesh?—Nothing can be more decisive for my purpose, than this comparison which you have suggested, between the word "to come," which is general, and the phrase

"to come in the flesh," which is specifick.—My thanks are due to you, for this illustration of my argument; which may be rendered still more evident, by applying the two phrases successively, to a familar instance. If some future historian of these planet-stricken times, should say, "In the latter end of the eighteenth century, came Dr Priestley, preaching the Unitarian doctrine," no one will suspect any thing more, than that a man of this name, preached this doctrine.—But if the historian should say, "Dr Priestley came *in the flesh*, preaching this doctrine;" if the writer, who may use this expression, shall have any credit in his day, a general curiosity will be excited to know, whether Dr Priestley had it in his power, to come in any way without his flesh, "unmanacled with membrane, joint, or limb:" and when once it shall be found, that he had not; the style of the writer will be condemned, and his credit perhaps lessened.—I leave you to make the application.

6. But you think, that St John's phrase, that "Christ came in the flesh," may be expounded by St Paul's phrase, that "he was partaker of flesh and blood." The passage to which you refer is this—"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same."* As you have only hinted, that some argument might be drawn from this text, to confirm your sense of St John's phrase; I am left to divine what your argument might be. Perhaps you would reason thus.—In this passage, it is said of men, that they are partakers of flesh and blood; and this expression is evidently descriptive, of the condition of

* Heb. ii. 14.

humanity. It appears therefore, that to be "a partaker of flesh and blood," is a Jewish phrase, which signifies "to be a man." But in this same passage, it is said of Christ, that "he likewise took part of flesh and blood." It is said of Christ therefore, that he was a man like other men: consequently, nothing more can be meant by his "coming in the flesh."—If this be your intended argument, I reply—that Christ was, indeed, a man like other men: and this perhaps, is all that is implied in St Paul's assertion, that he was "partaker of flesh and blood." But it follows not, that this is all which is implied in St John's expression, that "Jesus Christ came in the flesh;" which asserts indeed his humanity, but with an evident allusion to a prior condition: and the proper conclusion, from the comparison of St John's expression with St Paul's, is this: that the two are not, as you suppose, equivalent.

7. But I suspect, that you connect St Paul's expression with your own doctrine of materialism; and that you would argue thus.—Since it is said of men, who are flesh and blood, and nothing else, that they partake of flesh and blood; therefore, "to *partake* of flesh and blood," in the Jewish language, and "to *be* flesh and blood," in other languages, are equivalent phrases. Therefore Christ, of whom it is also said, that he partook of flesh and blood, was mere flesh and blood; a man like other men, in whom the mental faculties were the result of organization. Thus, you will say, the notion of Christ's preexistence, much more of his divinity, is overturned by the apostle's assertion; and, whatever may have been imagined, no allusion to his preexistence or his divinity, was intended in any expressions of the sacred writers. The assertion therefore of

Christ's real manhood, is all that can be contained in St John's expressions, that "Christ is come in the flesh." But in this argument, the conclusion results not, from any evident parallelism, of the different phrases used by St Paul and by St John; but it is a consequence, from a particular interpretation of St Paul's phrase; which interpretation of St Paul, rests not upon any thing in his expressions, but upon something quite out of Scripture: upon your notion of the mere materiality of man. To have shown the true foundation of this argument, is to have confuted it.

8. I must remark, that in whatever form this argument may be drawn, it will rest solely on the translation of the sacred text. For in the original, man's connexion with flesh and blood, and Christ's connexion, are expressed by different words: κεκοινωνηκε and μετεσχε. A difference, which, however slight it may appear to you, was thought of sufficient importance to be preserved in the Vulgate: *communicaverant—participavit.**

9. But, not to lay a stress, upon any critical refinements upon single expressions, let me ask your opinion, Sir, upon the general sense of the passage, in which this phrase, "to partake of flesh and blood," occurs. I would appeal to yourself, whether the conclusion, which you would build upon that particular expression, is not overthrown by the general sense of the passage. The purport of the passage is, to assign a reason why the Redeemer should partake of flesh and blood; that is, why he should be a man: but a reason why a man should be a man, one would not expect to find in a sober

* That κεκοινωνηκε is more than μετεσχε. See Iamblich. de Myst. sec. 2. cap v.

man's discourse. For why any thing should be what it is, rather than what it is not, is a question which few, I think, would ask, and none would attempt to answer. The attempt to assign a reason, why the Redeemer should be a man, implies both that he might have been, without partaking of the human nature, and by consequence, that in his own proper nature he was originally, something different from man; and that there might have been an expectation, that he would make his appearance, in some form above the human. It particularly implies, that an expectation of his appearance in some higher form, might be expected to prevail among the persons, to whom this reason is assigned; so that the manifest manhood of Christ, would be likely to be an objection with them, to his claim to the character of the Messiah. This, Sir, seems to deserve your particular attention. For the persons, to whom the apostle renders these reasons for the manhood of the Redeemer, were the Hebrews; the first Jewish Christians; of whom you say, that before their conversion at least, "they had no idea that their Messiah was to come down from heaven,"* having never been taught by their prophets, to expect "any other than a man like themselves, in that illustrious character."†

10. Upon the whole, since the phrase of "coming in the flesh," must be more than equivalent to the word "to come;" since there is no evidence of its supposed parallelism with St Paul's phrase, of "partaking of flesh and blood;" since, in the discourse of any but an Unitarian,

* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 49.
† Hist. of Corrup. vol. i. p. 2.

it must involve an allusion to the incarnation and divinity of our Lord; your defence of your argument from St John's first epistle, is insufficient: the argument is still to be considered as running in a circle, and it was properly adduced as the second, among my specimens of insufficient proof.

I am, &c.

N. B. The argument, which Dr Priestley has advanced in the fifth of his Second Letters, in favour of his own interpretation of the phrase "coming in the flesh," from a passage in St Polycarp's epistle, is considered and refuted in the first of the Supplemental Disquisitions.

LETTER FIFTH.

The Archdeacon's interpretation of Clemens Romanus defended.—The shorter epistles of Ignatius genuine.

DEAR SIR.

HAVING, to your own entire satisfaction, made good your argument from St John's first epistle, against my exceptions; you proceed to reply to the testimonies which I produced from Clemens Romanus, for the preexistence and divinity of our Lord.

2. When Clemens says, "our Lord Jesus Christ, came not in the pomp of pride and arrogance, although he had it in his power," you say, that the coming alluded to, was "no coming from heaven to earth; and that the pomp of pride and arrogance, in which our Lord came not, stands for an "ostentatious display" of the miraculous powers, which our Lord never made.* To this it is sufficient to reply, that my interpretation rests upon the literal sense of the holy father's words, which you suppose to be figurative; that you have nothing to object to the literal interpretation, but that it suits not with your own opinions; whereas I have something of great importance to say in its defence;

* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 13.

that it is established by the context. "He came not (says Clemens) in the pomp of pride and arrogance, although he had it in his power, but in humility, as the Holy Spirit spake concerning him." The pomp therefore of pride and arrogance, in which our Lord came not, is that pomp, which is the proper opposite of the humility, in which the Holy Spirit had foretold that he should come—For he came not in that—but in this he came. Now to determine what this humility is, Clemens immediately goes on, to cite the prophecies, which describe the Messiah's low condition. The humility, therefore, of an ordinary condition, is that in which it is said the Messiah came. The pomp, therefore, of a high condition, is the pomp, in which it is said he came not, although he had it in his power so to come. The expressions therefore clearly imply, that our Lord, ere he came, had the power to choose, in what condition he would be born.

3. In citing this passage of Clemens Romanus, I dealt very liberally with you; as I trust, indeed, that I have done in every part of the argument. I cited the passage, as it stands in our modern copies. More ancient copies, those which Jerome used instead, of καιπερ δυναμενος, "although he had it in his power," had καιπερ παντα δυναμενος, although he had *all things* in his power." This appears from Jerome's translation of the passage, which is in these words, "Sceptrum Dei, Dominus Jesus Christus non venit in jactantia superbiæ, cum possit omnia."* Now with this emendation of the

* Hieronym. in Esaiam, cap. liii.

last clause, which it seems was an assertion of our Lord's omnipotence, you are welcome to make what you can of the preceding clause, by figurative interpretations.*

4. No figurative interpretations will elude the force of my citations from Ignatius—but it is the particular happiness of the Unitarian writers, that they are never found at a loss for an expedient. All that I say of the repeated assertion of our Lord's divinity, in the epistles of Ignatius, you allow to be true, "according to our present copies of his epistles. But the genuineness of them, (you say,) is not only very much doubted, but generally given up by the learned." And lest this assertion should want that appearance of weight, which an air of confidence gives, you even tax my ingenuity "for concealing a circumstance, which, (you say,) I must have known;" and you challenge me to prove these epistles,

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* Dr Priestley, to whom it is a matter of equal ease, to bring the holy Scriptures, or the fathers, upon all occasions to speak his own sentiments, finds no assertion of our Lord's omnipotence in this clause of Clemens, thus rendered by Jerome: nothing more than an allusion "to the great power of which he became possessed, after the descent of the Spirit of God upon him at his baptism." (See the second of Dr Priestley's second Letters to me.) That is, to affirm that a person hath *all* things in his power, is, in Dr Priestley's apprehension of the terms, to affirm, that at a certain time he had *some* things in his power. Had any such allusion been intended to the miraculous powers, the verb *possit* in Jerome's Latin, should have been in one or the other of the preterite tenses. By the use of the present tense, Jerome describes a plenitude of power now enjoyed. This plenitude of power now enjoyed, is alleged as what might have been exercised by our Lord in time past, with respect to the manner of his own coming. It is a plenitude of power therefore, ever present to our Lord, now and in time past; and being allowed to be now present, is supposed of necessary consequence, to be capable of effects in time past. But this describes nothing less than the attribute of omnipotence. But language is no key to "unlock the mind of a Socinian."

"as we now have them, to be the genuine epistles of Ignatius."†

5. Sir, if the genuineness of these epistles be generally given up by the learned, my ignorance, not my ingenuity, is to be blamed, that I cited them as genuine. I indeed knew nothing of this general giving up. But since the testimony of Ignatius is allowed to be express, if the epistles be genuine from which it is produced; permit me to tell you, in few words, what I know of these epistles.

6. I know, that ancient writers mention seven epistles of Ignatius, written upon his journey from Antioch, where he was bishop, through Asia Minor; for that way his journey lay, when he was carried to Rome by Trajan's order, to be exposed to wild beasts. Of these epistles, six are said to have been addressed to the churches of six different cities: Ephesus, Magnesia upon Mæander, Tralles, Rome, Philadelphia, Smyrna; and the seventh was addressed to Polycarp. I know, that besides some other epistles, confessedly spurious, two editions, a longer and a shorter, are at this day current, of seven epistles under the name of Ignatius, inscribed to those to whom the real epistles of the blessed martyr, according to the ecclesiastical historians, were addressed. The longer epistles first appeared in print, in an old Latin version, published by Father Stapulensis, in 1498; a corresponding Greek text was published by Valentine Pacæus, from a manuscript in the Augustan library, in the year 1557. The shorter edition likewise

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† Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 18.

made its first appearance in print, in an old Latin version, published by Usher, from two manuscripts, in the year 1644. The Greek was published by Isaac Vossius, in 1646, from a manuscript in the Medicæan library at Florence. The Medicæan manuscript being imperfect in the end, wanted the epistle to the Romans. But a Greek text of this epistle, perfectly corresponding with Usher's Latin version, was published at Paris, from a manuscript of Colbert's, by Mr Ruinard, in the year 1689.

7. It has been made a question, whether the shorter epistles are from abridged, or the longer from interpolated copies. The phraseology of the longer, seems in some parts accommodated to the Arian notions: that of the shorter, is every where agreeable to the Catholick faith. The shorter edition hath the suffrage of the fathers of the five first centuries; their quotations, which are numerous, every where agreeing with this text. William Whiston, a man whose memory is more to be esteemed for his integrity, and the extent and variety of his reading, than for the soundness of his judgment; from pure attachment to the Arian cause, maintained the authority of the longer copies; but his opinion hath found but few abettors, and those of inconsiderable name, even in his own party. The Presbyterian divines, desirous to get rid of so great an authority as that of Ignatius, in favour of Episcopacy, the rights of which are set very high in these epistles, were unwilling to allow their authenticity in either form. But with a majority of the learned, these seven epistles are received as authentick; and the shorter edition is supposed to exhibit the genuine text. This, at least, was the opinion of Isaac Vossius, Usher, Hammond, Petavius, Grotius, Pearson, Bull, Cave, Wake,

Cotelerius, Grabe, Dupin, Tillemont, Le Clerc. On the other side, stand no names to be compared with these, except the three of Salmasius, Blondel, and Dallæus. Perhaps you will add that of Bochart. But the great Bochart's doubts, went to one only of the seven,* the epistle to the Romans; and they are founded on a chronology of the word *Leopardus,* which Pearson hath proved to be erroneous.†

8. Mosheim holds a middle opinion. The question of preference between the two editions, he thinks undecided. Whichever edition be preferred, he thinks the suspicion of interpolation and corruption cannot be entirely removed. That these epistles are of great antiquity, he thinks certain. That they are not altogether forgeries, so credible, that nothing can be more. But how far they are sincere, he takes to be a knot which cannot be untied.‡ At the same time he allows, what with me entirely overturns his singular opinion, that the authenticity of them would never have been called in question, had they not contained, what the advocates of Episcopacy knew how to turn to the advantage of their cause; which, when the Presbyterians and others, who were for abolishing the privileges of the clergy, understood; they attacked them with a warmth, by which they more harmed their own reputation than the authenticity of those writings.‖ It is true, he taxes the writers on the other side, but not so generally, with no less intemperance. But, in my judgment, the authenticity

* Hierozoic. P. I. lib. iii. cap. 8.
† Vindiciæ Ignatianæ, P. II. p. 91—94.
‡ De Rebus Christianorum ante Constantinum, p. 161.
‖ Ibid. p. 165.

of ancient writings must be set very high, which could never have been brought in question, but through prejudice.

9. With this preponderance therefore, of authorities on the side of the epistles, and with this confession of Mosheim against his own opinion, I shall take the liberty to appeal to them, as they stand in the shorter edition, as the genuine writings of the blessed martyr: not free indeed from those blemishes, which arise from the haste, the carelessness, and the ignorance of transcribers; but upon the whole, not less sincere, than most other pieces of the same antiquity. I shall appeal to them with the less scruple, forasmuch as the same sincerity, which I ascribe to them, and which is quite sufficient for my purpose, is allowed by the learned and the candid Lardner; whose judgment must have been biassed by his opinions, in prejudice of these writings, if any thing could have biassed his judgment, in prejudice of the evidence of truth. After suggesting in no very confident language, that "even the smaller epistles may have been tampered with by the Arians, or the orthodox, or both;" he adds, "I do not affirm, that there are in them any considerable corruptions or alterations."* If no considerable corruptions or alterations, certainly none, respecting a point of such importance, as the original nature of Christ. I will therefore still appeal to these epistles, as sufficiently sincere, to be decisive upon the point in dispute. Nor, shall I think myself obliged to

* These words of Dr Lardner, are cited by Dr Priestley himself, in his reply to the Animadversions, in the Monthly Review of June, 1783, p. 36. They make a part of his proof, that these epistles are so corrupted, as not to be quoted with safety. See reply to Animadversions, p. 35.

go into the proof of their authenticity, till you have given a satisfactory reply, to every part of Bishop Pearson's elaborate defence: a work, which I suspect you have not yet *looked through*.

I am, &c.

P. S. To the authorities for the epistles of Ignatius, according to the shorter copies, I must add Fabricius.

LETTER SIXTH.

In reply to Dr Priestley's second.—The difference of the Ebionites and Nazarenes, no singular or new opinion of the Archdeacon's.—The same thing maintained by Mosheim and other criticks of great name. Dr Priestley's arguments from Origen and Eusebius, not neglected in the Archdeacon's Charge.—Dr Priestley's conclusions from the several passages cited by him from Epiphanius, confuted.—The Nazarenes, no sect of the apostolick age.—Ebion, not contemporary with St John.— The antiquity of a sect, not a proof of its orthodoxy.

DEAR SIR,

THE citadel of your strength, is the argument from the Nazarenes; to which, however, I have given a place among my specimens of insufficient proof. You find the attack upon this fortress, warm on every side; and your resistence is proportionably vigorous. So impatient are you for its defence, that you take it out of its turn, passing by my third specimen—the argument from Athanasius; which you very properly consider as an outwork, which will be indeed of little consequence, if the citadel should surrender—which however, must be the case; neither force nor stratagem can defend it.

2. Two points, you know, must be made out to save this argument: the one, that the faith of the Nazarenes

was Unitarian; the other, that these Unitarian Nazarenes were the Hebrew Christians, or the members of the primitive church of Jerusalem. To prove the first point, you abide by your original assertion, that the Nazarenes and the Ebionites, were one and the same people, under different names. This assertion you attempt to defend against my objections. We shall see with what success.

3. You allow, "it has been imagined by some, that there was a difference between the doctrine of the Ebionites and the Nazarenes, concerning the person of Christ."* Something of a difference, some half-witted criticks have, it seems, *imagined.* But you take care to insinuate in the next sentence, that none before me, ever dreamed of so wide a difference, as I would put between them. It had only been imagined "that the Ebionites disbelieved, while the Nazarenes maintained, the miraculous conception;"† both concurring in the disbelief of our Lord's divinity. "For as to any Nazarenes, who believed that Christ was any thing more than man, you find no trace of them in history."‡ And you think it extraordinary, "that it should now be made a point, to find some difference between the Nazarenes and the Ebionites, inasmuch as you believe, no critick of any name in the last age, pretended to find any."‖ Indeed, you may well be astonished. For, "the learned Jeremiah Jones"§ wrote a chapter to prove them the same people.

4. Indeed, Sir, I must take shame to myself, and

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* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 14. † Ibid. ‡ Ibid.
‖ Ibid. p. 23. § Ibid.

confess, that this learned Jeremiah Jones, is not of my acquaintance. I find upon inquiry, that he is very much unknown among my brethren of the establishment; I am informed, however, that he was not undeserving of the epithet which you have coupled with his name, he was, it seems, the tutor of the venerable Lardner, and was thought, in natural ability, to excel his pupil. Nevertheless, Sir, I conceive I may be pardoned, if I presume to dissent from the opinion of Jeremiah Jones, notwithstanding the importance that may have accrued to it from the approbation of Dr Priestley. That, Sir, which you are pleased to call an imagination of some, the notion of a difference between the Nazarenes and the Ebionites, was the decided opinion of a writer better known than Jeremiah Jones— the illustrious Mosheim. "This little body of Christians," says that learned historian, "which coupled Moses with Christ, split again into two sects, distinguished from each other by their doctrines concerning Christ, and the permanent obligation of the law; and perhaps by other circumstances."* As a certain proof that they were two distinct sects, he observes, that each had its own gospel. He says, that "the Nazarenes had a better and truer notion of Christ than the Ebionites."†

5. It may be, Mosheim was the inventor of this distinction, since you have not found it in any critick of

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* Pusillum vero hoc Christianorum agmen, quod Mosen Christo sociabat, in duas iterum dissiliebat sectas; dogmatibus de Christo, legisque necessitate, forte aliis etiam rebus sejunctas. *Mosheim de Rebus Christianorum ante Constantinum.* Sæc. 2. sec. xxxix.

† Nazarei nimirum et de Christo multo rectius et verius sentiebant quam Ebionei. Ibid. n. * * *.

any name of the last age. Perhaps, Sir, you and I, when we speak of criticks of any name, may not always agree in the persons, to whom we would apply that description. May I then take leave to ask, what you think of Hugo Grotius? Was He a critick of any name? Vossius, Spencer, Huetius, were these criticks of any name? If they were, Sir, you must come again to your confessions. For Hugo Grotius, Vossius, Spencer, and Huetius* agree that the Nazarenes and Ebionites, though sometimes confounded, were distinct sects; and they maintain the opinion, which I now maintain, of the high orthodoxy of the proper Nazarenes, in the article of our Lord's divinity.

6. But it may be, that the Nazarenes were Unitarian, though they were not Ebionites. For the doctrine concerning our Lord's divinity, is not the only point, in which the pretended difference is placed: and "as to any Nazarenes, who believed that Christ was any thing more than man, you find no trace of them in history."† You have then been less successful than Hugo Grotius, Vossius, Spencer, Huetius: not to mention others of inferior note.

7. You see, Sir, (our readers at least will see,) that you had little ground to represent the opinion, which I maintain, of a difference between the Nazarenes and Ebionites, as singular or novel. Your attempt to set it forth in that light, I cannot but consider as a stratagem, which you are willing to employ for the preservation of

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* Grotius in Matth. c. i. Vossius de genere Jesu Christi, cap. ii. sec. 1. Spencer in Origen contra Celsum, ad. p. 56. Huetius in Origenis commentaria, p. 74.

† Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 14.

your battered citadel—the argument from the Nazarenes. In this stratagem, if I mistake not, you are completely foiled. In your sallies against the batteries which I have raised, I trust you will be little more successful. But as too much of stratagem is apt to mix itself with all your operations, it will be necessary that I watch very narrowly the manner of your approaches.

8. Your reply to my objections against the testimony, which Epiphanius is supposed to bear to the identity of the two sects, is opened with a complaint, that I have said nothing "to the arguments from Origen and Eusebius."* Sir, either here is more stratagem, or you have dealt by me, as you profess to do by the ancients. You have only looked through my Charge. Had you read it through, you could hardly have missed something that I say to the arguments from Origen and Eusebius. I flatly deny any direct testimony of Origen, in favour of the identity which you would prove; and I have shown that the passages, from which you would draw the inference, are little to your purpose."† The argument from Eusebius, you will be pleased to recollect, made no part of your original proof. It first appeared among certain corrections and additions, which are annexed to your "Reply to the Animadversions" of a learned writer in the Monthly Review. It was impossible therefore, that I should take notice of it in my Charge, which had been sent to the press, and was in great part printed, before I had any knowledge of the Reply, or indeed

* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 14.

† Charge I. sec. 15, and Appendix, sec. I.

of the animadversions which occasioned it. But in the Appendix to my Charge, which was written after I had read your Reply, and in consequence of it—I complained, that you had made no reference to the particular passages of Eusebius, upon which you would found your argument.*

9. However, that I said something very material to the argument from Epiphanius, you deny not. I said indeed, that no man could allege, as you do, the testimony of Epiphanius to the identity of the Ebionites and Nazarenes, who had read to the end, so much as the first sentence of Epiphanius's account of the Ebionites. And I still say the same thing: for in that first sentence Epiphanius asserts, that Ebion made additions to the doctrine of the Nazarenes. Among these additions I place, although you will not, the mere humanity of Christ.

10. You tell me in reply, that if I had myself read the second paragraph of this same chapter of Epiphanius, it would have shown me the errror of my own remark; for in that second paragraph, you say it appears, that the difference between the Ebionites and the Nazarenes, lay in other particulars, not in the doctrine of the mere humanity of Christ.† You then produce that paragraph, with a string of other passages, confirming, as you think, the assertion which you pretend to find in it, of the agreement of the two sects upon the point in question. Epiphanius tells us, as you think, in the second paragraph of his section about the Ebionites, "That

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* Appendix to Charge, sec. 2.

† Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 15—17.

Ebion borrowed his abominable rites (so you render βδελυρον) from the Samaritans; his opinion (γνωμην) from the Nazarenes; his name from the Jews." In the second section, as you understand him, he places the whole difference between the Nazarenes and the Ebionites, in a single circumstance, totally unconnected with the opinions about Christ. In the same section, you say, he speaks of the two sects as inhabiting the same country, and adds, that "agreeing together, they communicated of their perverseness to each other."*

11. Now, Sir, in these quotations, I have to complain partly of the want of critical discernment; partly of stratagem; partly of unskilful interpretation: and I affirm, that not one of the passages alleged, is to your purpose.

12. For the second paragraph of the first section, the only clause in it of which you can avail yourself, is that in which it is asserted, according to your translation, that "Ebion took——his opinion from the Nazarenes."† But here, Sir, is stratagem. Why is not the entire clause produced? Because the entire clause, would defeat the conclusion which it is brought to establish. Does Ephiphanius say, that Ebion took his opinion simply from the Nazarenes? He says it not; even if it be admitted, that the word γνωμην is rightly rendered by *opinion*. If *opinion* be indeed what is here signified by γνωμην, Epiphanius says that Ebion took his opinion from the "the Ossæans, the Nazoræans, and the Nasa-

* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 15.
† Ibid.

ræans." The Nazoræans of Epiphanius, (Ναζωραιοι) were the Christian Nazarenes. But his Nasaræans were no Christians. They were a Jewish sect—one of the seven which were subsisting at the time of our Lord's appearance; the fifth in Epiphanius's enumeration. The Ossæans, were the sixth of those seven sects of Judaism. So that, if any thing is asserted in this clause concerning the opinions of Ebion, it is, that they were a mixture of the extravagancies of three sects; two Jewish, and one Christian. But his general assertion will never determine, to which of these three sources, any particular opinion maintained by Ebion, is to be referred. It will be probable, that this doctrine of our Lord's humanity, was an accommodation of the old doctrine of the Nazarenes, to the prejudices of his Jewish friends. For how will you prove, Sir, that Ebion, if he taught the same opinions which you now maintain, was not actuated by the same generous motives: a tender charity for the Jews, whom he might propose, as you do, to reconcile to the evangelick doctrine, by divesting the doctrine of every thing properly evangelick?

13. But I contend further, that the word γνωμην, in this passage of Epiphanius, is not rightly rendered by *opinion*. It often indeed denotes *opinion* in good Greek writers; but it is not used in that sense here. That it is not, appears from the subsequent part of the same sentence; in which γνωμη is mentioned as something distinct from γνωσις and συγκαταθεσις των ευαγγελιων (perhaps we should read ευαγγελισων) και αποστολων περι πιστεως. "Ebion, says Epiphanius, desired to bear the appellation of a Christian, but not to adopt the practice of Christians, nor their γνωμη, nor their knowledge, nor their assent to

to the evangelists and apostles, concerning the faith."* Now knowledge and assent concerning faith to the evangelists and apostles, include religious opinion; γνωμη, therefore, being mentioned as distinct from these, is not opinion. It seems to be rather used here, for what is expressed in English by the word *sentiment;* a thing which often modifies opinion, but itself is not opinion. Of this use of the word, examples are not wanting. "Ebion, it is said, possessed the sentiments of Ossæans, Nazarenes, and Nasaræans." He resembled these Christian and Jewish sectaries, in that illiberality of sentiment, which inclined the Nazarenes, to think the observance of the ritual law necessary to a Christian's salvation, and disposed the Ossæans, and the Nasaræans, to many senseless superstitions. But this resemblance is no proof, that he took his opinion of the mere humanity of Christ, from the Christian Nazarenes.

14. But if this passage is not sufficiently explicit, the second section, you will tell me, is decisive. Unfortunately, the long passage which you have produced from this section, wants to be set in order, before any use can be made of it: and when we have made the best of the present text, which I fear is too corrupt to be perfectly restored without manuscripts, it will little serve your purpose. Much indeed of the confusion arises, from a false punctuation, which your own translation sets in a most conspicuous light; as a little remark which

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* Χρισιανων βουλεται εχειν την προσηγοριαν, ε' γαρ διπτυθεν τινητε πραξιν, και' την γναμην, και' την γνωσιν, και την των ευαγγελιων και' αποστολων περι πιστεως συγκαλα-θεσιν.

you have thrown in, points out the correction of it. "—— and first, he asserted that Christ was born of the commerce and seed of a man, namely Joseph, *as we signified above.*"* This assertion of Ebion's, had not been signified above: it is mentioned in this passage for the first time. You remark, that these words, "as we signified above," refer to the first words of the first section: but in the first words of the first section, we have no signification of Ebion's denial of the miraculous conception, nor in any words previous to this clause of the second section: and the reference cannot be to previous words, for that which no previous words contain. The reference therefore, which is explicitly to something previous, can have no connexion, with the denial of the miraculous conception, which is now mentioned for the first time. It must connect however, with something in the writer's present narrative, or it hath no meaning. Now in the words which immediately precede the clause, which regards Ebion's heterodoxy upon the article of the conception, that is, in the initial clauses of this section, Epiphanius actually repeats what he had said before. With these clauses therefore, this reference to the former part of his narrative is to be connected; and the intervening clause, regarding the conception, should be set out as a parenthesis. I will now present you with the Greek text properly pointed, accompanied with two translations; your own on one side, and mine upon the other; that our readers, comparing both with the original, may judge for themselves of the propriety of each.

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* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 16.

Dr. Priestley.

——he was cotemporary with the former, and had the same origin with them; and first he asserted, that Christ was born of the commerce and seed of a man, namely Joseph, as we signified above, [referring to the first words of his first section,] when we said, that in other respects he agreed with them all, and differed from them only in this, *viz.* in his adherence to the laws of the Jews, with respect to the Sabbath, circumcision, and other things that were enjoined by the Jews and the Samaritans. He moreover adopted many more things than the Jews, in imitation of the Samaritans.

Ουτος γαρ ὁ Εβιων συγχρονος μεν τυτων ὑπηρχεν, ἀπ' αὐτων δε συν αὐτοις ὁρμαται· τα πρωτα δε ἐκ παραπτυβης καὶ σπερματος ἀνδρος, τυτεστι τυ Ιωσηφ, τον Χριστον γεγενησθαι ἐλεγεν· ὡς καὶ ἠδη ἡμιν προειρηται· ὁτι τα ἰσα τοις ἀλλοις ἐν ἁπασι φρονων, ἐν τυτῳ μονῳ διεφερετο· ἐν τῳ τῳ νομῳ τυ Ιυδαϊσμυ προσανεχειν, καὶ τα σαββατισμον, καὶ τα ἀλλα παντα ὁσαπερ παρα Ιυδαιοις καὶ Σαμαρειταις ἐπιτελειται. ἐτι δε πλειω ὑτος, παρα τυς Ιυδαιυς, ὁμοιως τοις Σαμαρειταις διαπραττεται.

Dr. Horsley.

For this Ebion was contemporary with these, and he sets out from the same principles with them (but first of all he asserted, that Christ was begotten of the commerce and seed of a man, namely Joseph) as hath been already related by us. For agreeing with other [hereticks] in all things [else] he differed in this single point, in that he adhered to the Judaick law, with respect to the observation of the Sabbaths, and to circumcision, and to all other things which are common to the rites of the Jews and the Samaritans. And besides, he is punctual in many things, not regarded by the Jews, in conformity with the Samaritans.

15. The manner in which Ebion's opinion, concerncerning the conception of our Lord, is mentioned in parenthesis, seems to exclude it from those principles, which he borrowed from other sectaries. If those other sectaries therefore were the Nazarenes, then this opinion, as it should seem, was no principle with them; and this passage, like most of your quotations, contradicts what you have brought it up to prove.

16. You will perhaps object, that if Ephiphanius meant to insinuate, that Ebion and the Nazarenes held different opinions about Christ; he would not have named another thing, as the single point in which they differed. Nor hath he done this. Having described Ebion's doctrine, as a compilation of the extravagancies of other sects, he says, he differed only in a single point. That is, there was but a single point in his whole system, in which he differed from *all* the sects from which he borrowed: which was this, that his Judaism was of the Samaritan cast. But it follows not from this, that whatever he maintained besides, was to be found in the doctrines of the Nazarenes, or of any other in particular, of the various heresies of which the Ebionæan was composed.

17. But, to deal sincerely, I must confess, that it is not at all clear to me, that the Nazarenes are the sect intended, in the beginning of this section, under the description of Ebion's contemporaries, from whom he borrowed his principles. If they were not, this section will neither afford any proof of your opinion, nor be conclusive on the other side. The persons intended are not named, otherwise than by the pronoun τούτων: and for this pronoun, if you examine the original text, you will be much at a loss to find an antecedent. This

pronoun, used as it is here, as a relative, is generally to be referred to the persons mentioned last before, in the author's discourse. But in all the preceding part of this discourse about the Ebionites, the Nazarenes are no where mentioned, except in that sentence, in which they are joined with the Ossæans and the Nasaræans, and at the very beginning of the chapter, where they are intended by this same pronoun, as the sect described in the chapter next preceding. The persons last mentioned in the present discourse, are the Jews and the Samaritans: and of these the pronoun τούτων may be redditive. Ebion might be called their contemporary, if he lived before the Jews entirely lost their consideration in the world, as a religious sect; and while the Samaritans were yet subsisting as a distinct sect of Judaism; he set out from the same principles with them, because he maintained the permanent obligation of the ritual law. If this be the true exposition, of the two first clauses of this section; it is the purport of the parenthesis, which follows them, to remark, that Ebion, even in that part of his doctrine which could not be borrowed, either from Jews or Samaritans, carried his desire of accommodating to Jewish principles, such a length, as to acknowledge our Lord, for nothing more than a preacher of righteousness. But this leads to no conclusion about the faith of the Nazarenes.

18. I have sometimes thought, that the pronoun τούτων might be redditive, not of the Nazarenes singly, but of all the sects which are mentioned in the preceding part of the narrative, as furnishing the constituent parts of Ebion's system; namely, of the Jews, the Samaritans, the Ossæans, the Nasaræans, the Nazarenes, the Cerinthians, and the Carpocratians. With all these, accord-

ing to the confused chronology of this inaccurate writer, Ebion, as a junior with an elder, was contemporary: and he set out from the same principles with them; inasmuch as all his principles were borrowed, some from one of these sects, some from another: the only thing which was peculiar to himself being this; that the Judaism which he practised, was of the Samaritan cast. In this exposition of the pronoun τοῦτον, the importance of the parenthesis must be to signify, that the mere humanity of Christ was made a principle by Ebion, although it was no principle with those from whom he borrowed. It was indeed a part of the Cerinthian doctrine, not as a principle, but as a consequence from principles. The principles of the Cerinthian doctrine were the principles of the Oriental philosophy: and the denial of our Lord's divinity, and of his miraculous conception, in the system of Cerinthus, was a consequence of that cardinal principle of the Oriental philosophy, which put eternal enmity between God and every thing material. But with Ebion, the denial of the miraculous conception, was itself a first principle, independent of every thing else. In this view of it again, the parenthesis leads to no conclusion concerning the Nazarenes.

19. Which exposition of the pronoun τοῦτον is to be preferred, is a point upon which I can bring myself to no fixed opinion. I very much suspect, as I have already observed, some considerable corruption of the text: for, although Epiphanius is indeed a wretched writer, the obscurity of this sentence, as it stands, is more than mere bad writing is apt to create. But expound the pronoun as you please, the passage will be either against you, or at the best nothing to your purpose.

20. But in a subsequent sentence, Epiphanius speaks, it seems, "of the Ebionites, as inhabiting the same country as the Nazarenes;" and adds, "that *agreeing together, they communicated of their perverseness to each other.*" It is true, that in the passage which you have produced, Epiphanius speaks of the Ebionites, as the near neighbours of certain Nazarenes, and of a resemblance which the vicinity of situation produced—but the Nazarenes intended, were they the Christian Nazarenes, or the Nasaræan Jews? They are called "the lawless Nazarenes" [Ναζαρηνοι οἱ ἀνομοι]. The Christian Nazarenes, had nothing in their conduct, that might render them deserving of this epithet. Their error was, that they feared to use their liberty, not that they abused it. The Nasaræan Jews, as Jews, were lawless in a very emphatick sense; inasmuch as they renounced the whole of the Mosaick law, except that they circumcised, kept the Sabbath, and paid some regard to the stated festivals. It was not, that they denied the authority of Moses: but, by what may be gathered from Epiphanius's account of them, they pretended that the real laws of Moses were lost, and that the Pentateuch of the Jews was, in all but the historical parts, a spurious work.* Upon these principles, they held themselves released from all rites, but those which the history itself confirmed. This sect was found chiefly in the region of Basantis: and in a town called Cochaba, in the same

* This conjecture, which I formed from Epiphanius's account of this sect, I have since found confirmed by Damascenus; who says, that they held the Pentateuch of the Jews to be a spurious work, and pretended to have the original in their own hands. Τας δε της πενταλευχȣ γραφας ȣη ειναι Μωσεως δογματιζȣσι, αλλας δε παρ' αυτας διαβεβαιȣνται. Joan. Damascen. de Hæresibus.

region, Epiphanius places the original residence of Ebion. These Nasaræans therefore, were neighbours of the Ebionites, and they seem to be the people intended in this passage.

21. It may perhaps seem strange, that any resemblance should be pretended, between a Christian sect which adhered to the Mosaick law, and a Jewish sect which rejected it. But the first Ebionites, if Epiphanius is to be trusted in his description of them, retained nothing more of genuine Judaism, than the Nasaræans. Whatever more they had which looked like Judaism, it was borrowed from the Samaritan superstition.

22. But whoever these lawless Nazarenes might be, their agreement with the Ebionites, is an addition of your own, founded on a misinterpretation of the original. Epiphanius answers for nothing more, than some general resemblance. His words are to this effect. "From hence he began to propagate his pernicious doctrine; namely, from the same parts which it hath before been said those lawless Nazarenes inhabited. For being contiguous, he to them, and they to him, each imparted to the other of his own particular impiety. And yet, in certain things they differ; but in evil disposition, they were counterparts one to the other."* What you took for agreement is contiguity of situation; and the resemblance comes at last to nothing more, than an undefined general resemblance, with specifick differences.

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* Ενθεν αρχεσθαι της κακης αυτε διδασκαλιας, οθεν δηθεν και Ναζαρηνοι οι ανομοι προδεδηλωνται. Συναφθεις γαρ, ητοι εκεινοις και εκεινοι τυχω, εκατερος απο της εαυτε μοχθηριας τω ετερω μετεδωκε. και διαφερονται μεν ετερος προς τον ετερον καλα τι, εν δε τη κακονοια αλληλοις απεμοιξανται.

An entire likeness is not pretended in any circumstance, but the common depravity of disposition.

23. To these passages from the chapter about the Ebionites, you subjoin another, from the 7th section of the preceding chapter, which treats of the Nazarenes. "He says, that they were Jews in all respects, except that they believed in Christ; *but I do not know whether they hold the miraculous conception or not.*"* This you say, "amounts to no more than a doubt, which he afterwards abandoned, by asserting that the Ebionites held the same opinion concerning Christ with the Nazarenes; which opinion he expressly states to be their belief, that Jesus was a mere man, and the son of Joseph."† I lament, Sir, that, in justice to my own cause, I must here openly complain of the perverseness of your translation. When you cite an ancient author, why will you make him say more or less, than he hath said for himself? Why not translate literally? that your readers might see, how far your account of things is supported by express testimony, how far it is mere inference; and be enabled to estimate the degree of probability, with which each inference is accompanied. "—— they believed in Christ; but I do not know, whether they held the miraculous conception or not." Is this a translation of the words of Epiphanius? It is not. It is an artful substitution of an inference of your own, from the author's words, for the words of the author. I, Sir, in my Charge had furnished you with a more exact translation.‡ Why would you not adopt it; unless you

* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 17. † Ibid.
‡ Charge I. sec. 10.

could have made a better of your own, or could have shown its impropriety? "Concerning Christ," says Epiphanius, "I cannot say with certainty (or, I am not informed to say, οὐκ οἶδα εἰπεῖν) whether they too, carried away with the impiety of the aforementioned Cerinthus and Merinthus, think him a mere man; or affirm, as the truth is, that he was begotten of Mary, by the Holy Ghost." To affirm, "as the truth is, that Christ was begotten of Mary, by the Holy Ghost," in Epiphanius's sense of those words, was to affirm much more than the miraculous conception, in any sense in which an Unitarian might affirm it. It was to affirm our Lord's divinity. Epiphanius's confession, that he had no ground to assert, that the Nazarenes held the contrary opinion, amounts to much more than a doubt. It amounts to an unwilling confession of a base accuser; who had not the liberality to absolve in explicit terms, when he found himself unable to convict. As you have not yet produced the passage, in which Epiphanius asserts, that the Nazarenes and Ebionites held one opinion concerning Christ; your assertion, that he afterwards abandoned this doubt, or this acknowledgment, is destitute of proof; and it is the fair conclusion from this passage of Epiphanius, that the Nazarenes were orthodox in their opinions concerning Christ. This I showed at large in my Charge.* You now attempt to elude my argument, by setting up an unfair and sophisticated translation of the passage, upon which my reasoning was founded.†

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* Charge I. sec. 10, 11.

† In the third of his Second Letters to me, Dr Priestley has produced a passage from another part of Epiphanius's work, his chapter against the Arians,

34. Were the identity of the Nazarenes and Ebionites clearly established, still you could turn it to no advantage, without making good your other assertion, that the Nazarenes were originally the very same with the Hebrew Christians, or the members of the primitive church of Jerusalem. But of this I cannot find that you have brought a shadow of proof, except what you pretend to derive from the testimony of Origen; which I shall consider in my next letter. You talk indeed of the antiquity of the Nazarenes—you bid me observe, "that they were prior to Ebion,"* of whom you say,

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which clearly proves that the Ebionites and the Nazarenes, in the judgment of that writer, were different sects; in as much as both are separately mentioned. Dr Priestley perhaps may say, that whatever distinction this passage may prove, between the Nazarenes and the Ebionites, upon the whole of their doctrine; it clearly proves that they held one opinion concerning Christ, which is sufficient for his purpose. It must be acknowledged, that, in this passage, the Nazarenes are mentioned together with the Ebionites, as sects in error in their opinions about Christ, and confuted by the beginning of St John's Gospel; still I maintain, that, in that part of his work, where he professedly treats of the heresy of the Nazarenes, Epiphanius expresses a doubt of their heterodoxy upon the article of our Lord's divinity, in such terms, as ought to leave no doubt upon the mind of his reader, of their orthodoxy in that particular. And what he says of them, when they are only incidentally mentioned, ought to have much less weight than what he says, or shows himself averse to say, in that part of his work, where the errors of that sect are the immediate subject.

Dr Priestley, allowing Epiphanius to have been "in some things weak enough," exults however, in the testimony which, in his chapter against the Arians, he bears against the Nazarenes as a sect, which, together with the Ebionites, "held the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ." And he says, that in this Epiphanius "stands uncontradicted by any authority whatever." Dr Priestley is mistaken; rashly venturing to assert, that where no authority is known to him, none is extant. Epiphanius is in this contradicted, not only by himself, as I have already shown, but by a writer of far superior credit; by Joannes Damascenus, who, in his book *De Hæresibus*, says expressly, that the Nazarenes confessed Jesus to be the Son of God. Damascenus would not have said of Dr Priestley, or of any one maintaining the simple humanity of Christ, that he confesses Jesus to be the Son of God.

* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 18,

that "he was himself cotemporary with the apostle John;"† and you tell me, that in allowing that the "Jewish Christians were distinguished by the name of Nazarenes————from the time that they were settled in the country beyond the sea of Galilee, I carry the opinions of the Ebionites, as universally held by the Jewish Christians, to the very age of the apostles."† When you do me the honour to argue from my concessions, I wish, Sir, you would report them with more fidelity and exactness. I have allowed no such antiquity to the Nazarenes, as you would claim for them upon the ground of my concessions. I said not, that the Jewish Christians were distinguished by the name of Nazarenes, from the time when the first settlements were made beyond the sea of Galilee. I said, that the sect of the Nazarenes first arose, when those of the Jewish Christians, who pertinaciously retained their Judaism, made their final settlement in those parts, in consequence of Adrian's severe edicts, by which the Jews were banished from the ancient site of Jerusalem and the adjacent region. Thus, I carried not the opinions of the Ebionites up to the apostolick age: but I fixed the rise of a prior sect, to an epoch little earlier than the middle of the second century. I maintained, that the Nazarenes, at that time, separated from the main body of the Jewish Christians, and appeared as a distinct sect. It is not allowed by me, that from that time, or in any age of the church, "the whole body of the Jewish Christians were distinguished by the name of Nazarenes." If any such concession may

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* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 18. † Ibid, p. 21.

seem to be implied in the expressions, in which I speak of the Nazarenes in my Charge, (I. sec. 12.) I disavow it. Appealing against your assertions, to the sense of the learned and reverend assembly, which I had the honour to address; I rather sought expressions, which might convey the general part of an opinion common to us all, than such as might more precisely mark the particulars of my own. That the name of Nazarene was descriptive of a heresy, I was confident none in that assembly doubted. I was not equally confident but that some might doubt, whether that heresy, from the time the name was used, embraced not the main body of the Jewish Christians. Whatever doubts might subsist about the extent, I was confident there could be but one opinion, in that assembly, about the chronology of the name. But Ebion, you say, was contemporary with St John. To that circumstance, when it is proved, I shall be disposed to give great attention. I believe the opinion hath no foundation, but in the foolish story told by Epiphanius, of St John and Ebion in the bath. The same is told by other writers, of St John and Cerinthus; and it hath altogether the air of fiction. But, suppose I were to allow the highest antiquity to these Nazarenes; suppose that, with you, I were to place them in the apostolick age; would this oblige me to allow, that they were the true members of the primitive church? Had not the apostolick age its schisms and its heresies? The Simonians, the Nicolaitans, the Cerinthians; were not all these contemporary with the apostles? Were they therefore sound members of the church of Jerusalem? Be pleased, Sir, to consider this question.

I am, &c.

POSTSCRIPT.

1. Eusebius, in his *Ecclesiastical Theology*, speaks as if he thought the name *Ebionites* had been imposed by the apostles themselves, upon those who disowned our Lord's divinity; which necessarily implies, that, in his opinion, the sect and the name were of the apostolick age. "Our Saviour's own first heralds," says Eusebius, named those Ebionites——————who acknowledged not the Godhead of the Son."* Our Saviour's own first heralds, must be the preachers, it should seem, of his own appointment; namely, the apostles: and that they are the persons intended, is the more probable, for the distinction which seems to be made between these *first heralds* and *Ecclesiastical fathers*, who are afterwards mentioned. Strenuously as you assert the antiquity of the Ebionites, you have no where, that I remember, alleged this testimony. You were aware perhaps, that were it good for the antiquity of the sect, it would be equally good for the reason and origin of the name: for my own part, I am not inclined to avail myself of it; I consider it as a hasty assertion of a writer, over zealous to overwhelm his adversary by authorities: I mention it only, to protest against any use, which you may hereafter be disposed to make of it, in a dearth of proof of Ebion's antiquity. Should you urge me with any part of this testimony, I shall have a right to insist, that

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* Καὶ αὐτȣ δε τȣ σωτηρος ημων πρωτοκηρυκες Εβιωναιȣς ωνομαζοι, εβραικη φωνη πτωχȣς την διανοιαν αποκαλȣντες τȣς ενα μεν θεον λεγοντας ειδεναι, καὶ τȣ σωτηρος το σωμα μη αρνȣμενȣς, την δε τȣ υιȣ θεοτητα μη ειδοντας. Ecc. Theol. lib. i. c. 14.

you accept the whole—Should you produce it in proof, that an Unitarian sect existed in the apostolick age; you will be obliged to allow, that it is equally a proof, that the Unitarian doctrine was expressly condemned by the apostles. It will be no concern of mine, to disprove the antiquity of Ebion, however I may disbelieve it, so long as the very ground of his claim seals his condemnation—so long as his pretentions to an early existence, rest on a presumption, that he had the honour to be the object of apostolical censure.

2. Upon the story of St John and the Hæresiarch, in the publick baths at Ephesus, I passed judgment hastily, when I spake of it as a foolish story, carrying *altogether* the air of fiction. I ought to have recollected, that Irenæus* vouches strongly for so much of it as he relates. He even cites the testimony of Polycarp, in terms which may be understood to imply, that he was himself one of many, still living when he wrote, who had heard the story from the mouth of Polycarp. The testimony of Irenæus is hardly to be disbelieved; the testimony of Polycarp is irresistible. But the story, which Irenæus relates after Polycarp, he relates of St John and Cerinthus. It makes nothing therefore for the antiquity of Ebion. As related of him, with the addition of many improbable circumstances not mentioned by Irenæus, it may be deemed a fiction.†

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* Lib. iii. 3.

† Dr Priestley, in the third of his Second Letters to me, to corroborate the testimony of Epiphanius, alleges that of Jerome; who he says, "mentions the Ebionites, not only as a sect, but a flourishing sect, in the time of St John." But Jerome makes no such mention of the Ebionites. He says, that St John wrote his

LETTER SEVENTH.

Continuation of Reply to Dr Priestley's Second—Of the argument from Origen.—That it rests on two passages in the books against Celsus. The first misinterpreted by Dr Priestley in a very important point.—No argument to be drawn from the two passages in connexion.—Origen convicted of two false assertions in the first passage.—The opinions of the first age, not to be concluded from the opinions of Origen.

DEAR SIR,

IN failure of all other proof of your supposed identity of the Ebionites and Nazarenes, you still appeal to the testimony of Origen. You have however, given a new turn to this part of your argument. Your appeal was originally* to a pretended acknowledgment of Origen's, that the Nazarenes and the Ebionites were the same people. But being made sensible,† how difficult it must be to find an acknowledgment of this identity, in a

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Gospel in opposition to Cerinthus, and other hereticks, and principally the doctrine of the Ebionites (not then flourishing, but) *tunc consurgens*, then making its first appearance. This I readily allow; for what was afterwards the doctrine of the Ebionites, was first propagated by the Cerinthian Gnosticks.

* Hist. of Corrup. vol. i. p. 7.

† See the Monthly Review for June, 1783, and for September, 1783.

writer who never once names the Nazarenes; you abandon that project, and in the passages which were at first cited to establish this supposed identity, you have at last the good fortune to discover an immediate proof of your main proposition, that the primitive faith of the Hebrew church was Unitarian. Your method is, to trace from Origen the faith of the Jewish Christians in his age, and from their faith, to infer that of their ancestors.

2. The strength of this argument, lies in two passages in the books against Celsus; which are very distant from each other: for the one is in the second, the other in the fifth book; and yet they must be taken in connexion, to give any colour to your reasoning. You set it off indeed to great advantage, when, appealing to the first of these passages, you say, that it appears, and that I deny not that it appears, "that the unbelieving Jews called all those of their race, who were Christians, by the name of Ebionites, in the time of Origen;" and that "Origen's own words are too express, to admit any doubt of this."* Truly, Sir, I was not likely to deny a groundless assertion, before it was made by my antagonist; and you now make it for the first time; at least I remember nothing like it in your former publications. I believe I was myself the first to bring forward this passage from the second book against Celsus. In your history, you have appealed to Origen's acknowledgment, of the identity of the Ebionites and Nazarenes, without any reference to particular passages. I produ-

* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 13.

ced this passage, as of all that I could recollect, the most for your purpose.* I produced it in order to show, that when it is rightly understood, it is nothing to your purpose: for, although the Christians of the circumcision, in general, are in this passage called Ebionites, it is according to a peculiar definition of the word, which includes not what by other writers, always, and by Origen himself in other places, is included in the notion of the Ebionæan doctrine; namely, a denial of our Lord's divinity. The Nazarenes therefore, might be Ebionites, in the sense which is here given to that word, although they doubted not our Lord's divinity, and were quite another set of people than the proper Ebionites. I acknowledge therefore, that in this passage, "Origen says of the Jewish Christians of his own time, that they were Ebionites."† These were my very words. But I said not, that they were the unbelieving Jews, who imposed this name upon the converted: and now that you have been pleased to say it for me, I deny it; and I maintain, that Origen's words are too express to admit a doubt, that you have mistaken his meaning. The entire passage of Origen‡ is to this effect————"they of the Jews who believe in Christ, have not abandoned the law of their ancestors; for they live according to it; bearing a name, which corresponds with the poor expectations which the law holds

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* Charge I. sec. 15.

† Ibid.

‡ ————Οι απο Ιουδαιων εις Ιησουν πιστευοντες ου καταλελοιπασι τον πατριον νομον βιουσι γαρ κατ' αυτον, επωνυμοι της κατα την εκδοχην πτωχειας του νομου γεγενημενοι. Εβιων τε γαρ ο' πτωχος παρα Ιουδαιοις καλειται, και' Εβιωναιοι χρηματιζουσιν οι απο Ιουδαιων τον Ιησουν ως Χριστον παραδεξαμενοι. Origen in Celsum, p. 56. edit. Spencer.

out.* For a beggar is called among the Jews, (that is, in the Hebrew language,) Ebion— And they of the Jews who have received Jesus as the Christ, go by the name of Ebionæans." The converted Jews went, it is said, by this name; but where have you found that the unbelieving Jews imposed it? Not in Origen, Sir; but in the Latin translation of Gelenius. Attend to the reasons assigned by Origen for the name, and you cannot but perceive, that it could never be imposed by Jews—it was given in contempt: the objects of the contempt were observers of the Mosaick law; and the cause of the contempt was, the mean opinion which was entertained, by those who gave the name, of expectations built on legal righteousness. Could these, Sir, be the sentiments of unconverted Jews?

3. It would have been a circumstance of much advantage to your argument, which I doubt not you well understand, that the unconverted Jews should have been the coiners of the name: because it would have followed, that the name was originally common to the whole body of the Hebrew Christians. Then since Origen, in the other passage in the fifth book, makes, as you observe, only two sorts of Ebionites, the one believing, the other denying the miraculous conception, the deduction might have seemed not unfair, that Origen knew of no Hebrew Christians that were not Unitarians.

4. You will say, perhaps, that since we have Origen's testimony for the universality of the name, the argument from the two passages, taken in connexion, may

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* Literally, *being named after the poverty of the law in expectation.*

still proceed. If I could admit the universality of the name upon Origen's testimony, I should insist, that his description of the twofold Ebionites, in the fifth book, is not exactly what you take it to be. I should remark, that the words, ὁμοιως ἡμιν, "in like manner as we do," make an important branch of the character of the milder sort————"these," says he, "are the double Ebionites; who either confess Jesus born of a virgin, *in like manner as we do*, or think he was not born in that manner, but like other men."* I should maintain, that the words "in like manner as we do," are equivalent to the words "as the truth is," in Epiphanius's description of that belief in the miraculous conception, which he says the Nazarenes, for aught he knew to the contrary, might hold; and I should contend, that Origen affirms, but with less equivocation, of these better Ebionites, what Epiphanius reluctantly confesses of the Nazarenes, that they held the Catholick doctrine concerning the nature of our Lord. And in this manner, the words of Origen seem to have been understood, both by Grotius and Vossius; when they allow, that the Nazarenes, though orthodox in this part of their faith, are included, in this passage of Origen's fifth book, in the appellation of Ebionites. I should contend, that if the former passage, proves the name general for the whole body of the Hebrew Christians, the latter equally proves, that the notion of an Unitarian was not necessarily included

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* Εςωσαν δε τινες και' τον Ιησυν αποδεχομενοι, ως παρα τυτο Χριςιανοι ειναι αυχυντες, επι δε κατα τον Ιυδαιων νομον, ως τα Ιυδαιων πληθη, βιυν εθελοντες· υτοι δε εισιν οἱ διττοι Εβιωναιοι, ητοι εκ παρθενυ ομολογυντες ομοιως ημιν τον Ιησυν, η' υκ υτω γεγενησθαι, αλλως τυς λοιπυς ανθρωπυς· τι τυτο φερει εγκλημα τοις απο της εκκλησιας. Contra Cels. p. 272.

in it. The connexion therefore of these two passages, makes little for your purpose; since the second serves but to overthrow the argument, which might be built upon the first. It justifies what I advanced in my Charge, upon a presumption that the first, singly, would be made the foundation of the argument from Origen; that the word Ebionite, in Origen's time, or at least in his use of it, had outgrown its original meaning.

5. In this manner, I should combat your argument from these two passages; were it not that I think too lightly of the testimony of Origen, in what relates to the Hebrew Christians, to be solicitous to turn it to my own advantage. Let his words be taken as you understand them; and so far as the faith of the Hebrew Christians of his own time is in question, let him appear as an evidence on your side—I shall take, what you may think a bold step; I shall tax the veracity of your witness—of this Origen: I shall tell you, that whatever may be the general credit of his character, yet in this business, the particulars of his deposition are to be little regarded, when he sets out with the allegation of a notorious falsehood. He alleges of the Hebrew Christians in general, that they had not renounced the Mosaick law. The assertion served him for an answer, to the invective which Celsus had put in the mouth of a Jew, against the converted Jews, as deserters of the laws and customs of their ancestors. The answer was not the worse for wanting truth, if his heathen antagonist was not sufficiently informed, in the true distinctions of Christian sects, to detect the falsehood—But in all the time which he spent in Palestine, had Origen never conversed with Hebrew Christians of another sort? Had he met with no Christians of Hebrew families, of the church

of Jerusalem? Was the Mosaick law observed, was it tolerated, in Origen's days, in the church of Jerusalem, when that church was under the government of bishops of the uncircumcision? The fact is, that after the demolition of Jerusalem by Adrian, the majority of the Hebrew Christians, who must have passed for Jews with the Roman magistrates, had they continued to adhere to the Mosaick law, which to this time they had observed more from habit than from any principle of conscience, made no scruple to renounce it, that they might be qualified to partake in the valuable privileges of the Ælian colony, from which Jews were excluded. Having thus divested themselves of the form of Judaism, which to that time they had born, they removed from Pella and other towns to which they had retired, and settled in great numbers at Ælia. The few, who retained a superstitious veneration for their law, remained in the north of Galilee, where they were joined perhaps by new fugitives of the same weak character, from Palestine. And this was the beginning of the sect of the Nazarenes. But from this time, whatever Origen may pretend, to serve a purpose, the majority of the Hebrew Christians forsook their law, and lived in communion with the Gentile bishops, of the new modelled church of Jerusalem; for the name was retained, though Jerusalem was no more, and the seat of the bishop was at Ælia.* All this I affirm with the less hesitation, being

* See Dr Priestley's objections to this representation of facts, in the fourth of his second Letters to me, and my Defence, in my Remarks on his second Letters, p. 2. c. ii.

supported by the authority of Mosheim;* from whom indeed I first learnt to rate the testimony of Origen, in this particular question, at its true value.†

6. It is in defiance therefore of the fact, and I fear of his own knowledge of the fact, that Origen affirms of the Hebrew Christians in general, that they lived in the observance of the Mosaick law: and it must be equally in defiance of the fact, that he affirms, that they were all in general called Ebionites: for he pretends not that this name generally belonged to them, otherwise than as Judaizers. His expressions in the passage in the fifth book, seem to imply a retractation of both these assertions; for there, he speaks only of *some*, who, with the profession of Christianity, retained the practice of Judaism. These *some*, he says, were the Ebionites; and, what is more, he describes these Ebionites, not indeed as universally Unitarians, but as despicable wretched hereticks, whose extravagancies could bring no disgrace upon the Christian church, of which they were no part. Were the Hebrew Christians, living in communion with the bishop of Jerusalem, in the days of Origen, no part of the true church of Christ? If they were a part of it, in Origen's own judgment they were no Ebionites. "I would not believe this witness upon his oath," says Mosheim, "vending, as he manifestly does, such flimsy lies."‡

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* De rebus Christianorum ante Constantinum. Sæc. ii. sec. 38. Note.*

† See his Dissertation about Ebion, which is the tenth in order in the first volume of a Collection, entitled, *Dissertationes ad Historiam Ecclesiasticam pertinentes.*

‡ Ego huic testi, etiamsi jurato, qui tam manifesto fumos vendit, me non crediturum esse confirmo. *Mosheim de Ebione. sec. x.* See the veracity of

7. I may now, Sir, without damage to my cause, freely make you a present of the whole testimony of Origen, not only as it is given by him, but as it is interpreted by you. As it is given by him, it states, that the Hebrew Christians in his time, were generally Judaizers: as interpreted by you, it states, that in his time, they were generally Unitarian. But if this testimony were more unexceptionable than it is, and this sense of the testimony less doubtful, what evidence would it afford, that the first Hebrew Christians were Unitarians in the time of the apostles?

8. You pretend not, that this would follow by necessary consequence; but you say, "if the Jewish Christians were universally Ebionites in the time of Origen, the probability is, that they were very generally so, in the time of the apostles."* Whence should this probability arise? From this general maxim, it seems: that "whole bodies of men, do not soon change their opinion."† You are indeed, Sir, the very last person, who might have been expected to form conclusions upon an historical question, from mere theory, in defiance of the experience of mankind—in defiance of the experience of our own country and our own times. How long is it, since the whole body of dissenters in this kingdom, (the single sect of the Quakers excepted,) took their standard of orthodoxy from the opinions of Calvin? Where shall we now find a dissenter, except perhaps among

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Origen defended by Dr Priestley, and further impugned by me, in the fourth of Dr Priestley's second Letters to me, and in my Remarks on the second Letters, p. 2. c. i.

* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 21.

† Ibid.

the dregs of Methodism, who would not think it an affront to be taken for a Calvinist?*

9. I now, Sir, take my leave of your argument from the Nazarenes. I trust I have shown, that, although it is the chief strength of your cause, it was well entitled to a place among my specimens of insufficient proof, of which it was the fourth in order. Before I proceed to examine other parts of the evidence, by which you think to establish the high antiquity of the Unitarian doctrine; give me leave to remind you, that, although you have overlooked it, a very positive proof is at this day extant in the world; that the divinity of Christ was the belief of the very first Christians. This shall be the subject of my next letter.

I am, &c.

POSTSCRIPT.

A learned correspondent of mine, an eminent divine of the church of Scotland, a Calvinist,† and by consequence, a serious and devout believer in the Catholick doctrine of the Trinity; hath remarked to me, that your assertion, that the Nazarenes were the first Hebrew Christians, might have had some colour given to it, from the history of the accusation of St Paul before Felix, in the Acts of the Apostles. St Paul was charged upon that occasion, by Tertullus the orator, as he is called, as a ringleader

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* Of the numbers of the Calvinists among the dissenters of the present day, see the fourth of Dr Priestley's second Letters, and my Remarks, p. 2. c. iv.

† The person meant, was my maternal uncle, the Rev. Robert Hamilton, D.D. many years professor of divinity in the college of Edinburgh.

"*of the sect of the Nazarenes*:" whence it might have been argued, that this was the name, which Christians in general at that time bore. This argument, I think, is far more specious, than any you have produced for yourself; but it is only an instance, by which it may be seen how easy it is, to frame arguments, in that oblique kind in which you so much delight, which may give a false colouring to things, and impose upon the ignorant or heedless. It is for this purpose, I believe, that it is produced by my learned and much honoured correspondent; not as a proof which, had it been set up by you, would have convinced, or even staggered, either him or me; it only proves, that in the infancy of Christianity, Christians, among the unbelieving Jews, who considered them as an heretical sect in their own religion, went by the name of Nazarenes, as followers of the Nazarene; for that was the appellation which, in contempt, they gave our Lord himself, from the obscure village to which his family belonged. But while the Christians were called Nazarenes by the unbelieving Jews, they were called among themselves *The Brethren, They of the Faith*, and *The Faith;* till at length, when they became more numerous, and received a large accession of converts from the Gentiles, *Christians* became the general name; and the Hebrew Christians, who still perhaps bore the name of Nazarenes among the Jews, were distinguished among Christians by the names of *The Hebrews*, and *They of the Circumcision*. I still therefore abide by my assertion, that the name of Nazarene was never heard of *in the church*, that is, among Christians themselves, as descriptive of a sect, (as a general name for the whole fraternity of believers, it was never heard of in the church at all,) but as descrip-

tive of a sect, it was never heard of before the final destruction of Jerusalem by Adrian; when it became the specifick name of the Judaizers, who at that time separated from the church of Jerusalem, and settled in the north of Galilee. The name was taken from the country in which they settled; but it seems to have been given in contempt, and not without allusion to the earlier application of it, by the Jews, to the Christians in general: the intent of it was, to signify that these Judaizers, who were for imposing the yoke of the Mosaick law upon the brethren of the uncircumcision, knew so little of the spirit of the gospel, that they were only to be considered as a sect of Jews; and were undeserving of any more honourable name, than that by which the unbelieving Jews, of the apostolick age, had been accustomed to express their contempt for the then new and little family of Christ; that they could not be more properly described, than as heretical Jews, living in the poorest village of the poorest province.

LETTER EIGHTH.

A positive proof still extant, that our Lord's divinity was the belief of the very first Christians.—The Epistle of St Barnabas not the work of an apostle, but a production of the apostolick age.—Cited as such by Dr Priestley.—The author a Christian of the Hebrews.—A believer in our Lord's divinity.—Writes to Christians of the Hebrews concurring in the same belief.

DEAR SIR.

I AM to produce a positive proof, that the divinity of our Lord was the belief of the very first Christians. Give me leave then to ask your opinion of that book, which hath been current in the church from the very first ages, under the title of *The Epistle of St Barnabas.* It is quoted, you know, by Clemens Alexandrinus, not to mention later writers, as the composition of Barnabas the apostle. Take no alarm, Sir—I shall not claim a place for it in the canon—I shall not contend, that any apostle was its author—I am well persuaded of the contrary: but the reasons which persuade me, are such as ought to have no weight with you, if you will be true to your own principles. The style is indeed embarrassed and undignified; the reasoning is often unnatural and weak; texts of the Old Testament, are drawn by violence to allegorical senses, which are inadmissible:

as when Moses, encouraging the Israelites to take possession of the promised land, is supposed to exhort the Jews to embrace the Christian religion; and in the description of Canaan, as a land flowing with milk and honey, the land is our Saviour's body; the milk and honey, are the doctrines and promises of the gospel—the attempt to find evangelical types in the Jewish rites, is injudiciously conducted; the essential part of a rite, which was of divine appointment, is often superficially treated; and the supposed sense of subordinate ceremonies, and those very often of human institution and of no significance, is pursued with a trifling exactness: thus, in the exposition of the red heifer, and in that of the scape goat, the stress is principally laid upon circumstances, about which the divine law is silent. But what may least of all be reconciled with the apostolick spirit, is that strange cabalistick process, by which the name of Jesus, and the cross, are drawn from the number of Abraham's armed domesticks; and the great credit which the author gives himself for such discoveries. My notion of inspiration, will not allow me to believe, that an inspired apostle could be the writer of such a book, and be vain of having written it—your principles, leave you at liberty to be less scrupulous—you, who have convicted St Paul of reasoning to precarious conclusions,* may easily admit, that St Barnabas, the companion of St Paul, might reason from false premises—you, who think that one apostle "has strained his imagination very much,"† to find analogies be-

* Hist. of Corrup. vol. ii. p. 370.
† Ibid. vol. i. p. 24.

tween the rites of Judaism, and something in Christianity, may easily suppose, that another apostle, from the same motive, a desire of reconciling the Jews to Christianity—may have strained much more, to make the analogy much more complete. I can therefore see no reason, why you should not receive what is called the Epistle of St Barnabas, extravagant and nonsensical as it is in many parts, for the genuine work of Barnabas the apostle; but this is much more than I desire, and much more than is necessary to my argument. * I suppose, however, that you will allow, what all allow, that the book is a production of the apostolick age: in the fifth section of your history of the doctrine of atonement, you quote it among the writings of the apostolick fathers—I think it fair to remind you of this circumstance, lest you should hastily advance a contrary opinion, when you find the testimony of this writer turned against you.

2. You allow him a place, then, among the fathers of the apostolick age: and will you not allow, that he was a believer in our Lord's divinity? I will not take upon me, Sir, to answer this question for you; but I will take upon me to say, that whoever denies it, must deny it to his own shame. "The Lord," says Barnabas, "submitted to suffer for our soul, although he be THE LORD OF THE WHOLE EARTH, unto whom he said, the

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* Modica sunt, quæ in ejus gratiam, nec (ut puto) facile recusanda: ut nimirum, si non ipsis saltem annis ejus honos habeatur; si non apostolum agnoscamus; eum tamen ceu patrem revereamur; et demum, si non in canonem illum recipiendum ducamus, saltem in classicis scriptoribus, pro dignitate quam olim obtinuit apud ecclesiæ scriptores antiquissimos, numeremus. *Præfat. Editoris Oxoniensis.*

day before the world was finished, Let us make man after our image and our likeness."* Again, "—— for if he had not come in the flesh, how could we mortals, seeing him, have been preserved; when they who behold the sun, which is to perish, and is the work of his hands, are unable to look directly against its rays."† Compare Deu. xviii. 16. Exod. xxxiii. 20. Judges vi. 23. and xiii. 22. Again "—— if then the Son of God, being Lord, and being to judge the quick and dead, suffered, to the end that his wound might make us alive; let us believe that the Son of God had no power to suffer, had it not been for us."‡ And again, "Mean while thou hast [the whole doctrine] concerning the majesty of Christ; how all things were made for him and through him; to whom be honour, power, and glory, now and forever."‖ He who penned these sentences, was surely a devout believer in our Lord's divinity: it is needless to observe, that he was a Christian; and almost as needless to observe, that he had been a Jew, for in that age, none but a person bred in Judaism, could possess that minute knowledge of the Jewish rites, which is displayed in this book. In the writer therefore of the Epistle of St Barnabas, we have one instance

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* Dominus sustinuit pati pro animâ nostrâ, cum sit orbis terrarum dominus, cui dixit die ante constitutionem sæculi "Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram." sec. v.

† —— Ει γαρ μη ηλθεν εν σαρκι, πως αν εσωθημεν ανθρωποι βλεποντες αυτον, οτι τον μελλοντα μη ειναι ηλιον, εργον χειρων αυτȣ υπαρχοντα, ȣκ ισχυȣσιν εις ακτινας αντοφθαλμησαι. sec. v.

‡ —— Ει ȣν ὁ υιος τȣ θεȣ, ων Κυριος, και μελλων κρινειν ζωντας και νεκρȣς, επαθεν, ινα ἡ πληγη αυτȣ ζωοποιηση ημας· πιςευσωμεν, οτι ὁ υιος τȣ θεȣ ȣκ εδυνατο παθειν, ει μη δια ημας. sec. vii.

‖ Habes interim de majestate Christi, quo modo omnia in illum et per illum facta sunt: cui sit honor, virtus, gloria nunc et in sæcula sæculorum. sec. xvii.

of a Hebrew Christian of the apostolick age, who believed in our Lord's divinity.

3. But this is not all. They must have been originally Jews to whom this epistle was addressed. The discourse supposes them well acquainted with the Jewish rites, which are the chief subject of it; and indeed, to any not bred in Judaism, the book had been uninteresting and unintelligible. They were Hebrew Christians, therefore, to whom a brother of the circumcision holds up the doctrine of our Lord's divinity. He upholds it, not barely as his own persuasion, but as an article of their common faith: he brings no arguments to prove it—he employs no rhetorick to recommend it—he mentions it as occasion occurs, without showing any anxiety to inculcate it, or any apprehension, that it would be denied or doubted—he mentions it in that unhesitating language, which implies that the publick opinion stood with his own. So that, in this writer, we have not only an instance of an Hebrew Christian, of the apostolick age, holding the doctrine of our Lord's divinity; but in the book, we have the clearest evidence, that this was the common faith of the Hebrew Christians of that age, or in other words, of the primitive church of Jerusalem.

4. This, Sir, is the proof which I had to produce, of the consent of that church with the later Gentile churches in this great article. It is so direct and full, though it lies in a narrow compass; that if this be laid in the one scale, and your whole mass of evidence drawn from incidental and ambiguous allusions, in the other,

"The latter will fly up, and kick the beam."

I am, &c.

LETTER NINTH.

The proof of the orthodoxy of the first age, overturns Dr Priestley's arguments from Hegesippus and Justin Martyr.—Hegesippus a voucher for the Trinitarian faith.—Dr Priestley's own principles set aside his interpretations of Justin Martyr.—Dr Priestley himself gives it up.—Tertullian makes no acknowledgment of any popularity of the Unitarian tenets in his own time.

DEAR SIR,

SINCE it is proved of the first Christians of the circumcision, that they were believers in our Lord's divinity; what becomes of your two arguments to the contrary, from Hegesippus and Justin Martyr?

2. The argument from Hegesippus, rested on a presumption that Hegesippus himself was an Unitarian; that Hegesippus himself was an Unitarian was presumed, because he was a Christian of the Hebrews; and the Christians of the Hebrews, were supposed to be generally of that persuasion: but now that the reverse is proved of the Hebrew Christians, the presumption must be reversed concerning Hegesippus. Hegesippus must be deemed no Unitarian, and all consequences deduced from the contrary supposition, must be reversed, or at least, they will vanish.

3. You remark indeed, that Hegesippus, enumerating the heresies of his time, makes no mention of the Ebionæan."* But this, I suppose, is mentioned, only as a circumstance that might seem to corroborate the inference, from the supposed prevalency of the Ebionæan tenets in the ancient Hebrew church, if that supposition might be allowed to stand. It will hardly be pretended, that this circumstance alone, will amount to a proof, that Hegesippus was a dissenter from what hath been shown to be the prevailing opinion of his church. Of the five books of his Ecclesiastical Commentaries, nothing more survives, than a few sentences, cited by Eusebius in different parts of his history; which all brought together, might perhaps fill two pages and a half in a folio of a middling size. In these fragments, no mention occurs of the Ebionæan heresy—Is it therefore to be concluded, that the Ebionites were not mentioned, or not mentioned as hereticks, in the entire work? Or where is the cogency of this argument? In certain fragments of the work of Hegesippus, the Ebionites are not mentioned as hereticks; therefore the author was himself an Ebionite.

4. Scanty as these fragments are, Providence hath so ordered, that clear evidence is to be found in them, that Hegesippus was no Ebionite; and that his testimony is to be found in them, in favour of the Catholick faith. That he was no Ebionite, appears with the highest evidence, from a little circumstance incidentally mentioned by Eusebius, which those who only *look through* an-

* Hist. of Corrup. vol. i. p. 8. and vol. ii. p. 486. Reply to Monthly Review for June, p. 8. Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 143.

cient writers, may be very apt to overlook. Eusebius relates, that Hegesippus cited the proverbs of Solomon, by a title which implied his acknowledgment of the book :* whereas, the Ebionites acknowledged no part of the Old Testament but the Pentateuch, nor the whole of that.† His testimony in favour of the Catholick faith, is contained in his declaration—"that he found in all the churches which he visited, in his journey to Rome, that faith maintained, which was agreeable to the law, the prophets, and the doctrine of our Lord."‡ Hegesippus, in this declaration, bears his testimony to the faith of all the churches at this time, that it was the faith which Christ had taught. But what faith the churches at this time maintained, let Irenæus and Justin testify: and where is the Unitarian who will have the forehead to affirm, that the faith, described as the faith Catholick, by Irenæus and by Justin, was any other than the Trinitarian?

5. So much for Hegesippus—Now for Justin Martyr. Your argument from his supposed apology for his own opinions, as contrary to the general and prevailing, rests on a particular interpretation of certain expressions, which in themselves perhaps, are not free from am-

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* Euseb. Ecc. Hist. lib. iv. c. 22.

† Dr Priestley, in the third of his Second Letters, questions this fact: that the Ebionites acknowledged no part of the Old Testament but the Pentateuch; and I must confess that his objections carry some weight. He remarks in particular, that Irenæus says of them, that they were over-curious in the exposition of the prophecies; and that Grabe mentions fragments, which he had seen, of an exposition of prophets, ascribed to Ebion. Still, that Hegesippus was no Ebionite, is evident from the favourable testimony which he bears, to the general doctrine of the church in his own time.

‡ Eusch. Ecc. Hist. lib. iv. c. 22.

biguity. But this interpretation, Sir, rests on your assumption, that the first Christians were Unitarian. This being now disproved, I will reason against your interpretation, from your own principles, and, with little variation, in your own words; and from the contrary interpretation, I will deduce the contary conclusion.

6. Justin wrote, you know, "about the year 140, *i. e.* about eighty years after the time of the apostles."* If we consider the state of opinions in their time "we can hardly doubt, whether Justin asserts it or not, that the doctrine of *our Lord's divinity*† *must* have been the prevailing one in his time."‡ For we have certain evidence,‖ that it was the opinion of the church in the age of the apostles; and it is not likely, that so important a doctrine should be generally abandoned, "in so short a time as fourscore years.§ And if we take in another well authenticated circumstance, we shall be obliged to reduce this short space to one still shorter. Hegesippus says——that the church of Jerusalem continued a virgin, or free from heresy, till the death of Simeon, who succeeded James the Just, that is, till the time of Trajan,¶ or about the year 100 or perhaps 110. ——Knowing therefore, (*from another evidence, that of Barnabas,*) what this purity of Christian faith was, and what Hegesippus must have known it to be; we have only the space of forty, or perhaps thirty years, for so

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* Reply to Monthly Review for June, p. 17.

† Dr. Priestley's words are *the simple humanity of Christ.*

‡ Reply to Monthly Review for June, p. 17.

‖ See my last Letter.

§ Reply to Monthly Review for June, p. 17.

¶ Euseb. Ecc. Hist. lib. iii. c. 32.

great a change. So rapid at that particular period must have been that movement, which we find by experience, to be naturally, one of the very slowest in the whole system of nature, *viz.* the revolution of opinions in great bodies of men. Can it then be thought probable, that the generality, either of Jewish or Gentile Christians, or both considered as one body, the οἱ πλειστοι, should have abandoned the doctrine of *our Lord's divinity** in the time of Justin Martyr?"† Certainly not. The words therefore, οὐδ' ἂν οἱ πλειστοι ταυτα μοι δοξασαντες εἰποιεν could not be intended to convey the sense, which you and your vindicator would impose upon them. On the contrary, they must be understood as an assertion, or at least as an insinuation, that the opinion of our Lord's mere humanity, was generally condemned.

7. I once thought, to have entered minutely into every part of the argument, which you and your vindicator have framed from this passage of Justin. But I find myself excused from that task, by your candid acknowledgment, in the sixth article of your postscript, that you are influenced in your construction of this passage, by your own particular opinions; and that another person, having a different persuasion concerning the state of opinions in that age, will naturally be inclined to put a different construction upon it."‡ A passage, which may bear one or another construction, according to the previous persuasions of the reader, can be of little avail on either side. You are welcome to all the proof of that

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* Dr Priestley's words are, *the simple humanity of Christ.*

† Reply to Monthly Review for June, p. 18, 19.

‡ Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 130.

sort, which you will take the trouble to amass. You seem, Sir, not insensible of its insignificance. Perceiving, at last, that the expressions of Justin, when you have made the most of them, are but ambiguous, you are inclined to lay but little stress upon the passage: you resume the consideration of it, with a declaration, that you are not "solicitous about trifles."* I must remark however, that expressions, which in themselves might be very ambiguous, may receive a definite sense from the known history of the writer's times. This is the case in this passage of Justin—his words, considered by themselves, are ambiguous; but, connected with the opinions of the writer and of his age, they afford a decisive testimony against you.

8. But you think, if Justin Martyr and Hegesippus fail, you have still the positive testimony of Tertullian, to oppose to my conclusions, from the faith of the first Christians. Tertullian, who was little younger than Justin, complains, that in his time the Unitarian doctrine was the general persuasion. "The simple, the ignorant, and the unlearned, who are always a great part of the body of Christians, because the rule of faith, transfers their worship of many gods to the one true God; not understanding that the unity of God is to be maintained, but with the economy; dread this economy."† I must confess, Sir, here seems to be a complaint against the unlearned Christians, as in general unfavourable to the Trinitarian doctrine; but the complaint is of your own raising—Tertullian will

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* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 127.

† Hist. of Corrup. vol. i. p. 55.

vouch but for a very small part of it. "Simple persons,* says Tertullian, (not to call them ignorant, and idiots,) who always make the majority of believers, because the rule of faith itself, carries us away from the many gods of the heathen, to the one true God; not understanding, that one God is indeed to be believed, but with an economy (or arrangement) of the Godhead; startle at the economy. They take it for granted, that the number and disposition of the Trinity, is a division of the Unity. They pretend that two, and even three, are preached by us, and imagine that they themselves, are the worshippers of one God. We, they say, *hold the monarchy.* Latins have caught up the word *monarchia,* Greeks will not understand *œconomia.*" Let the author's words be thus exactly rendered, and you will find in them neither complaint, nor acknowledgment, of a general prevalence of the Unitarian doctrine, among Christians of any rank. Tertullian alleges, that what credit it obtained, was only with the illiterate; nor with all the illiterate, but with those only, who were ignorant and stupid in the extreme. To preclude the plea of numbers, he remarks, that the illiterate will always make the majority of believers. "Some simple people, he says, "take alarm at the notion of a plurality of persons in the unity of the Godhead. Simple people, said I! I should have said, ignorant and dull; who have

* Simplices enim (nec dixerim imprudentes et idiotæ) quæ major semper credentium pars est, quoniam et ipsa regula fidei, a pluribus diis sæculi, &c. non intelligentes unicum quidem, sed cum suâ œconomiâ credendum, expaveseu t ad œconomiam.

never been made to comprehend the true sense of the apostle's creed; which speaks of one God, in opposition only to a plurality of independent gods, worshipped by the heathen, without any respect to the metaphysical unity of the Deity. When it is considered, that persons of mean endowments must always be the majority of a body, collected, as the church is, from all ranks of men; it were no wonder, if the followers of the Unitarian preachers, were more numerous than they really are." This, Sir, is the natural exposition of the passage, which you cite, as Tertullian's testimony of the popularity of your favourite opinions, in his own time. It is no such testimony. It is a charge of ignorance against your party; of such ignorance as would invalidate the plea of numbers, if that plea could be set up. The argument which you build, upon the rank and condition of Tertullian's Unitarians, who were common or unlearned people, can be of no force, unless it could be proved, that the Unitarian opinion was general in this rank of Christians. The common people, who will be the last to depart from the opinions of their ancestors, when they are left to themselves; will, on the other hand, be the first to be staggered with difficulties, and, for that reason, the first to be misled. Whatever therefore, might be the novelty of the Unitarian doctrine, in the age of Tertullian, it is no wonder that it should find admirers, among the most iguorant and stupid of the common people.*

* See the Second of the Supplemental Disquisitions.

9. You must search, Sir, for some clearer testimony, than any that is to be found in Tertullian, Justin Martyr, or the few surviving fragments of Hegesippus, to oppose to my proof from the epistle of St Barnabas.

I am, &c.

LETTER TENTH.

In reply to Dr Priestley's third letter, in which he would prove, that the primitive Unitarians were not deemed hereticks.—His arguments from Tertullian, Justin Martyr, and Irenœus, confuted by the Monthly Rviewer.—The insufficiency of Dr Priestley's reply.—The arguments from Clemens Alexandrinus, and from Jerome, confuted.

DEAR SIR.

IT should seem, that you have some secret mistrust in your own heart, of the proof which you pretend to bring, that the Unitarian doctrine was orthodoxy in the first age; or you would have been less solicitous to show, that the primitive Unitarians were not deemed hereticks. For a proof, that confessed orthodoxy was not deemed heresy, or in other words, that the orthodox did never excommunicate themselves, might have been spared. This however, is the subject of your third letter. Your arguments from the apostles' creed, as it is stated by Tertullian;* from the little severity with which Irenæus speaks of the Ebionites;† and from the respect with which Justin Martyr treats those blasphemers;‡ for

* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 27, 28.
† Ibid. p. 32. ‡ Ibid. p. 34.

that is the appellation by which his regard for them is expressed, have been already so completely answered by my good and able *ally*,* the Monthly reviewer,† that little is left for me to say on the subject.

2. I must take this occasion to declare, that you are perfectly right, in your conjecture,‡ that I entertain an high opinion of that gentleman's learning in ecclesiastical history. Indeed, my opinion of his learning hath been gradually rising, while yours hath been going down:‖ and what you predicted, is at last come to pass; I think myself happy in the alliance of that able critick. I am informed by your last publication,§ that my valuable ally is the Rev. Mr Samuel Badcock, a dissenting minister at South Molton, in Devonshire. To what ever denomination of Christians my worthy fellow-labourer may belong, he is learned, and an able advocate of the faith which was at first delivered to the saints, and his alliance will not be disgraceful, though he chooses to fight in a reviewer's armour. Indeed, I cannot see for what reason the alliance of a Christian divine, although he be a reviewer by profession, should be less creditable than that, which you, Sir, so obsequiously court, with Jew, Turk, heretick, and infidel. You seem to think it unfair, that your antagonist should avail himself of the prodigious advantage, which the review gives him, of a cheap and immense circulation:¶

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* "Dr Horsley considers this writer as learned in ecclesiastical history, and may wish to have him for an ally."

† In the Monthly Review for January, 1784.

‡ See note (*).

‖ Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 159.

§ Remarks on the Monthly Review of the Letters to Dr Horsley, &c.

¶ Preface to the Letters to Dr Horsley, p. xxi.

this complaint, Sir, really comes with an ill grace from you; who are every day diffusing your dangerous doctrines among the common people, in pamphlets published for their benefit, in an ordinary form, to be purchased at the easy price of sixpence, a groat, and even twopence. Some reserve on our part might be proper, if any were observed on yours: but while you invite the most illiterate of the laity to take a part in the dispute, it is our duty to guard them what we can, from seduction; to take advantage of every mode of cheap and general circulation, that the antidote may be as widely spread, and as easy to be had, as the medicated phials. I return to my subject.

3. Justin Martyr's respect for the Unitarians of his time, you collect from certain passages, in which, speaking of hereticks, with the highest indignation, he makes no allusion, as you conceive, to the Unitarians. My learned ally replies,* that in one of these passages, Justin Martyr expressly alludes to the Unitarians, under the very honourable character of blasphemers of the Christ, whose coming had been announced by the prophets. He remarks, that in this passage, Justin couples the name of Christ, with the title of "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," in a manner which, as it must bring to every learned reader's recollection, other passages of the holy martyr's writings, in which Christ and the God of Abraham, are described as the very same person; clearly defines the particular blasphemy, which was the subject of the accusation. My learned ally complains, that your translation of this passage is so

* Monthly Review for January, 1784, p. 61, 62.

managed, as to conceal this allusion to the Unitarian heresy; and to convey "no idea of distinction, between the Maker of the world, and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." He might have added another complaint: that in your translation, you have suppressed another clause in the same period, in which certain persons are treated with great severity, "who, instead of worshipping Jesus," [instead of paying him divine worship, for that is the proper force of the verb σεβειν] "confessed him only in name." Your reply* is, indeed, very extraordinary—It consists of three parts: An apology for the omissions; a defence of your argument; a flat denial † that you have made the omissions, for which however you have condescended to apologize.

4. Your apology is, that the omissions were made to *shorten a long Greek quotation*; ‡ but, Sir, the omissions are in your English translation; and the Greek, which is given at length at the bottom of your page, is nothing shortened by them—if the passage was to be shortened, either in Greek or in English, why was this shortening effected, by the omission of those clauses in particular, which might seem at least adverse to your argument? Your defence is, that the omitted passages, affect not the argument either way: for the whole of Mr Badcock's remark is answered, you say, at once,§ by observing, "that it is to no sort of purpose, who it was that Justin meant by the God of Abraham, Isaac,

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* Remarks on the Monthly Review of the Letters to Dr Horsley, sec. I.
† Appendix to the Remarks.
‡ Remarks, p. 14.
§ Ibid. p. 13.

and Jacob; but who it was, that the hereticks he is speaking of, meant by the person so described, and whom they meant to blaspheme: and this certainly was not Jesus Christ, but another being, the supposed maker of the world, the author of the Jewish dispensation, and the introducer of much evil, which they said Christ was sent to rectify." Sir, I apprehend, and my learned ally, I believe, will be of the same opinion, that the true, not the supposed, maker of the world, was the person blasphemed, by the introduction of the fabulous *Demiurgus* of the Gnosticks. Of the same opinion was Justin. You cannot, Sir, know so little of his language as to imagine, that by the title of ποιητης των ολων, *the Maker of the Universe*, he describes the Gnostick *Demiurgus*, not the true Creator, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. But how is it that you maintain, that Jesus Christ was not blasphemed, by those whom Justin accuses? Justin describes those whom he would accuse, as blasphemers of Jesus Christ. This is, in part, the matter of his accusation—that you should attempt to deny it is extraordinary, Sir, when you confess, that you omitted it "to shorten,"—it appears, however, that your arguments rest entirely upon a supposition, that the blasphemy of Jesus was no part of Justin's accusation: you took therefore, that method of shortening, which might best serve your purpose.

5. But you insist, that "they were Gnosticks only, not Unitarian Christians, that Justin was reflecting upon or alluding to."* Sir, will you take upon you to define on whom Justin would reflect, in contradiction to Justin's

* Remarks, p. 13.

own declaration? I think with you, that the phrase αλλοι γαρ και αλλον τροπον is distributive; introducing, not the mention of any new sect, but a specifick enumeration of the sects which had been already mentioned, under the general description of "those, who taught men to say and to do, many impious and blasphemous things." But the force of the objection, which my learned ally hath brought against your argument, depends not on the exact sense of this phrase—it is sufficient for our purpose, that a blasphemy of Christ, by denying his divinity, and refusing to honour him with divine worship, is a part of Justin's description of the heresies to which he alludes; whence it is manifest, that his reflections allude to other hereticks beside the Gnosticks; unless indeed you will choose to say, that some of the Gnosticks had a principal share in this Unitarian blasphemy: which, if you should affirm, you will in me have no antagonist. It is indeed my opinion, that the Cerinthian Gnosticks were the first who denied the divinity of our Lord—Cerinthus was much earlier than Ebion; and Ebion, in his notions of the Redeemer, seems to have been a mere Cerinthian: but if you concur with me in these opinions, it is little to your purpose to insist, that Justin Martyr's reflections are levelled only at the Gnosticks; since in the Gnosticks, according to this view of their opinions, he censures the Unitarians: if you deny, that our Lord's mere humanity was a doctrine maintained by any branch of the Gnosticks, still Justin expressly censures the Unitarians. If the Ebionites are not mentioned by name, are you sure they are not included among the [αλλοι αλλω ονοματι] "others of various denominations," thus generally mentioned after an enumeration of the principal Gnostick sects? The

Ebionæan heresy was at this time in its infancy, and probably too inconsiderable to deserve particular notice.

6. Such, Sir, is your apology for your omission, and such is your defence of your argument. After this apology, and after this defence, comes in your appendix a flat denial of the omissions, for which you have apologized. A friend has told you, that the passage of Justin is entire, and in its proper place in your letters to me, page 31.* It is true, Sir, the passage is entire, in the Greek, in the margin of your book:—but has your friend told you, that it is entire in your translation? My learned ally complains, and indeed, Sir, with too much reason, that you write for the unlearned—The entire passage, as long as it appears not in your translation, lay innocently enough in the Greek, at the bottom of your page.

7. To your argument from the apostle's creed, as recited by Tertullian,† it might, Sir, be a sufficient reply, that Jesus Christ is mentioned in it as the Son of God; a title which, in the sense in which it was constantly expounded and understood, reprobates the Unitarian heresy; but my learned ally refers you‡ to another creed, produced by Tertullian in the book, *De Præscriptione, &c.* in which the divinity of Christ is more explicitly asserted. This you say is not simply a creed, but an exposition of the creed,‖ and expresses no more than

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* Appendix to Remarks.

† Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 27, 28.

‡ Monthly Review for January, 1784, p. 60.

‖ Remarks, &c. p. 18.

Tertullian's own faith :"* Tertullian himself, Sir, "was of another opinion—He calls this exposition, a rule of faith appointed by Christ—he says, it expressed the general faith, which was disputed by none but hereticks." After this, Sir, will you say, that "Tertullian did not consider Unitarians as excluded from the name and assemblies of Christians?"†

8. Clemens Alexandrinus, who makes frequent mention of hereticks, hath been very silent, you think, about the Ebionites; hence, you seem desirous to infer, that Clemens thought them not heretical. "Almost the whole," these are your words, "Almost the whole of his seventh book of *Stromata*, relate to that subject [heresies]. He mentions fourteen different heresiarchs by name, and ten heresies by character; but none of them bear any relation to the Ebionites, or any species of Unitarians."‡ Indeed, Sir, it was not without reason, that I complained in my former publication, of the peculiarities of your style: I hope, that the great work which you are preparing upon the subject of our present controversy, will be accompanied with a glossary, to explain the words of the English language, upon which you shall be pleased to impose new senses; and that in particuliar, you will not omit to inform your readers, how much of a thing may be meant by the WHOLE in your new phraseology.

9. I find, Sir, by the best computation I can form upon a single example, which I am sensible must be liable to great inaccuracies, I speak therefore under the

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* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 21.
† Ibid. p. 27. ‡ Ibid. p. 118.

correction of your authoritative decision—but by the best computation I can form, the WHOLE may be any part of a thing not less than a forty-eighth! I beg your pardon —I had written this, when turning back to the errata, at the beginning of your book, I there find, that you have been yourself, very properly, shocked, at the extravagant hyperbolism of your own expressions; and for the words *almost the whole*, you advise the reader to substitute these, *a great part*. Sir, a reluctant and imperfect retraction, is more unseemly, than the first error, be it ever so enormous: if you would not be thought to impose upon your reader's ignorance, or to presume upon his inattention, you must correct again; and for *a great*, bid him read *a very little part*. The seventh book of the *Stromata*, in Sylburgius's edition, which I use as most convenient for my present purpose, because the pages, not incumbered with notes, all contain equal quantities of text; in this edition, the seventh book, Greek and Latin, fills 48 pages—the general subject of the book is, the excellence of Christian Knowledge in preference to Philosophy: this argument fills more than 38 pages of the 48, that is, more than three-fourths of the whole book, without any mention of hereticks; then, the author answers an objection to the certainty of Christian knowledge, taken from the differences of opinion that subsisted among the different sects: this introduces a general invective against hereticks, and a dissuasive of heresy, drawn from general topicks, not from the enormities of particular sects; which fills eight pages more: the dissuasive of heresy, leads to an argument for the authority of the church upon the footing of antiquity; and this introduces the names of some remarkable heresies, which are mentioned for no other purpose, but

to show that the very denominations which they bore, argued a late origin, singularity of opinion, and separation from a more ancient society. This list, with many interspersed remarks upon the origin of each sect, and assertions of the unity of the true church, fills perhaps three-fourths of one of the two remaining pages of the book: for the last page is taken up with a whimsical explanation, of the Levitical marks of clean and unclean beasts; which are supposed to be types, of the good and bad qualties, of true Christians and of hereticks. Thus it appears, that that great part of the seventh book of the *Stromata*, which you had well nigh mistaken for the whole, is somewhat less than one part in forty-eight.

10. But the Ebionites have no place in that long list of hereticks, which occupies almost the whole, or, to speak more accurately, a great part, or, to speak exactly, almost a forty-eighth part of the seventh book of the *Stromata*.* I think indeed they have not, unless they be included, which I suspect may be the case, among the Peratick hereticks; but I will grant that they are omitted: is it, Sir, a consequence, that Clemens thought their opinions indifferent? I cannot see the necessity of this conclusion, unless indeed it had been of importance to the argument of Clemens, that he should make an exact enumeration of all the sects, which he deemed heretical—but this was not the case: a few instances sufficed for the illustration of his reasoning; and these, in a discussion with Greek philosophers, he would

* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 118.

naturally select from those heresies, which, for something of subtlety and refinement in their doctrine, were the most likely to have attracted the notice of the Gentiles. A sect, which lived in obscurity in the north of Galilee, of no consideration for number, learning or abilities; was likely to be the last that he would mention.

11. It is another circumstance which you urge, Sir, in favour of the early Unitarians; that it is confessed by Jerome, that the Ebionites were anathematized, not for their Unitarian opinions, but for their rigid adherence to the Mosaick law,* ——*propter hoc solum a patribus anathematizati sunt, quod legis cærimonias Christi evangelio miscuerunt.*

12. I shall frankly confess, Sir, that if nothing more were known, either of the Ebionites or Cerinthians, from ecclesiastical history, than what might be gathered from this sentence of Jerome, I should be apt to conclude, that the single error of either sect was this: that they Judaized—the words however are capable of another meaning; namely, that the Judaick superstition, was a thing so criminal in the judgment of the primitive Christians, as to constitute, *by itself*, one very sufficient reason for the excommunication of the sects which were addicted to it. For it is to be observed, that the Ebionites are coupled in this passage with the Cerinthians. It is said of both, that "for this single thing they were anathematized, that they mixed the ceremonies of the law, with the gospel of

* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 34.

Christ." This being said of both without distinction, must be said of either, in some sense, in which it may be true of both: and if it aquit the Ebionites of heresy, except in the single article of their Judaism, it equally acquits the Cerinthians: if it be to be concluded from these expressions of Jerome, that to deny our Lord's divinity was no heresy in the Ebionites; it is equally to be concluded from these same expressions, that to deny that God was the Creator of the universe, was no heresy in the Cerinthians. If this passage of Jerome, be no testimony in favour of the Cerinthian doctrine about the creation, it is no testimony in favour of the Ebionæn doctrine about our Lord—it is lame and defective, like every other testimony which you have produced to the same purpose; and your opinion, that the primitive Unitarians were not considered as hereticks, I must still, Sir, in defiance of all your testimonies, take the liberty to place among the extravagant assertions of Daniel Zuicker, of which Simon Episcopius, was the charitable, but insufficient advocate.

I am, &c.

POSTSCRIPT.

YOU are pleased, Sir, to say, in the conclusion of your third letter, that the Unitarian doctrine, even in its most obnoxious form, existed in the very time of the apostles. I deny that the Unitarian doctrine existed, at that time, in the most obnoxious form. Produce your indisputable evidence. Observe, that by the most

obnoxious form, I understand that form, which excludes the worship of Christ.

N. B. In answer to Dr Priestley's argument, from the writings of Irenæus in particular, see the third of the Supplemental Disquisitions.

LETTER ELEVENTH.

In Reply to Dr Priestley's fourth, in which he defends his argument from a passage in Athanasius.—The sense of the words ἁπλα ἐυλογος mistaken by Dr Priestley.—The sense of the word συνεσις mistaken by Dr Priestley.—Prudence and caution not synonymous.—The matter of fact, as represented by Athanasius, mistaken by Dr Priestley.—His grammatical argument refuted.—That Athanasius speaks of unconverted Jews, proved from a comparison of the two clauses in which Jews are mentioned.—The Gentiles not uninterested in questions about the Messiah.—Of deference to authorities.

DEAR SIR,

A SUPPOSED testimony of Athanasius made a principal branch of your original proof, that the faith of the first Christians was Unitarian: and this, with other principal branches of your proof, found a place among my specimens of your evidence, of which it was the third in order. For this testimony of Athanasius, you refer your reader to Athanasius's defence of the Alexandrine Dionysius, where you think you find a confession of two very important circumstances: that the apostles used great caution in divulging the doctrine of the proper divinity of Christ; and that the occasion of this

caution, was the prevalency of a contrary persuasion among the first Hebrew Christians.

2. In opposition to this, I took upon me to assure the Reverend assembly which I had the honour to address, that no mention of the caution of the apostles, or of the heterodoxy of the first Jewish Christians, is to be found in the defence of Dionysius—I believe I might have added, in any part of the writings of Athanasius.

3. You have now, Sir, in your fourth letter, produced the passage from the defence of Dionysius, in which you conceive that these important secrets are betrayed: this passage, you say, you "only abridged before"—* (I am sorry, Sir, to remind you, that the manner in which your abridgments are managed, has appeared in other instances.) You abridged it before, but now you "give a larger portion of it at full length:" not the whole, by your own confession; "for the whole is much too long to transcribe." Pardon me, Sir, if I add, that the whole, were it transcribed, would justify the summary which I have given of it in my Charge: it would prove, that the example of the apostles is alleged for the purpose which I assign, and in the manner which I mention: it would prove, therefore, that this "larger portion," which you have given, "at full length," is nothing to your purpose. But to bring the matter to a short issue, I will set the general scope of the discourse quite out of the question: I will take the particular portion, which you have produced, by itself, as you desire it should be taken: and I will show, that even thus taken, it will give no support to your assertions,

* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 39.

without a singular construction of certain words and phrases, which cannot be admitted.

4. The apostles, it is said, spake of Christ as a man; a man of Nazareth; a man obnoxious to sufferings. Was it, that the apostles were in the sentiments of Arius? No such thing. "But this they did, as wise master-builders and stewards of the mysteries of God; and they had this specious pretence for it ————."* Stop, Sir, a moment—what do I hear? A specious pretence for it! For what? For doing as wise master-builders and stewards of the mysteries of God—Are specious pretences needed then for wise conduct? Or were the apostles men to make pretences? Surely this is the language of Dr. Priestley, not of Athanasius. He thought more reverently of the apostles—let him speak for himself. Και την αἰτιαν ἐχουσιν ἐυλογον. Is *pretence* the sense of αἰτια? The true Greek word for *pretence* is προφασις, and even had this word been used, the adjective ἐυλογος would have carried it away from that base meaning, which is inseparable from the English words *specious pretence*: for ἐυλογος is not *specious* in the English sense: it may be applied to any thing *in quo species cernitur honesti;* but it is not mere seeming—had Athanasius meant to say, that the apostles had a specious pretence only for their conduct, the adjective must have been πιθανος. He must have said, και προφασιν τινα ἰσχον πιθανην—or, και ὐκ ἀπιθανον τινα ἰσχον προφασιν.

5. The word αἰτια hath two principal senses; a philosophical and a popular: either of the two may suit

* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 39.

this place: amongst the philosophers, it signifies a cause, in any one of the four kinds of causes; the material, the efficient, the formal, or the final: hence it comes to signify a motive, motives being final causes, considered in their relation to the mind of a rational agent. Thus Plato, speaking of the Creator's motive, for a particular arrangement of the heavenly bodies, τα δ' ἀλλα, ὁτι δη και δι' ἁς ΑΙΤΙΑΣ ἱδρυσατο, εἰτις ἐπιξιοι πασας &c. *in Timæo.* Again, δια δη την ΑΙΤΙΑΝ και τον λογισμον τονδε ἐν ὁλον ἐξ ἁπαντων ——ἐτεκτηνατο. *in Timæo.* A motive may be either good or bad, but αἰτια ἐυλογος can be only good—it must be a wise and honourable motive; or, in plain English, *a good reason.*

6. Αἰτια, in the rhetorical or popular sense, answers to the English word *cause,* in its forensick meaning: it signifies an action or suit at law, or a criminal indictment: in this sense αἰτια ἐυλογος is a cause fairly defensible, upon a just and honourable plea—I am inclined to prefer this sense of the word, in this place, because the verb ἐχυσι is in the present time, when the preceding and the following, are in the past: "if the conduct of the apostles should be at any time questioned, they have a fair and substantial plea." This may still be expressed in English by *a good reason.* This therefore is the proper English phrase to convey the holy father's meaning, whether αἰτια be taken in its philosophical, or in its popular sense.

7. Now, Sir, if for *specious pretence* you will be pleased to substitute *good reason*; you will find that this passage, even in your own translation, will afford no ground for the inferences you would build upon it: Athanasius proceeds to show what this good reason

was; and he commends the great sagacity which was displayed, in the conduct of the apostles.

8. The deficiencies of your translation, I must however confess, are abundantly compensated in your comment; "I now have produced the passage," you say, "and have pointed out a word, *viz.* συνεσις, which, in the connexion in which it stands, can bear no other sense than caution, and great caution; μετα πολλης συνεσεως ——."* Sir, may I ask in what lexicon (you must excuse me, if I suspect that you are used to take the senses of Greek words from ordinary lexicons—) in what lexicon, good or bad, have you found that συνεσις in any connexion, may stand for *caution?* It is literally the meeting or coming together of different things: and applied to the mind, it is properly that faculty, or that act of the mind, by which it brings things together, and compares them, and forms a ready judgment of fitnesses and discongruities. It is expounded by the ancient Greek lexicographers, who best understood their own language, to be the "knowledge of comparables and incomparables; or a ready following of the mind, quickly bringing together the notions of things, readily discovering what is proper and beseeming to each."† Plato says more concisely, συνιεναι means that the mind *goes along* with things.‡ *Sagacity* is the English word, which most nearly renders the same idea—*Prudence*, the word which you have used in your translation, may be born; but the idea which it gives, is rather similar, than the same. You have

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* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 45.

† See Phavorinus.

‡ In Cratylo.

shown, you say, "from the whole tenor of the discourse, that Athanasius could have intended nothing else than to describe their prudence, or extreme caution."* *Prudence, or extreme caution!* Do you really think, Sir, that prudence and caution in the English language are synonymous? If that be your opinion, I must beg that one or both of these words may go into the glossary,† and be declared equivalent. *Caution* is indeed sometimes used abusively for *discretion;* but in its proper sense, it carries with it the notion of some dishonest art: and caution, in a teacher or disputant, always denotes an artful provision by some dishonest reserve, for the success of doctrine or of argument. In the present case, if you use the word without affixing to it the notion of concealment, it will not serve your purpose; but nothing of concealment is implied in the Greek word—Athanasius extols the sagacity of the apostles: their caution he never mentions.

9. Still you will insist, that he describes the thing, though he may not have called it by its proper name: "He evidently, you say, does not represent them as deferring the communication of the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, on account of its being more conveniently taught afterwards, as part of a system of faith; but only, lest it should have given offence to the Jews;"‡ I cannot read this sentence without astonishment, when I turn back to the quotation, and find that you have fairly produced the passage, in which Athanasius, in your own translation, as well as in the original, affirms;

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* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 45.

† See page 187.

‡ Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 45.

that what related to our Lord's humanity, was taught *first*, for no other reason, but that the doctrine of his divinity might be taught *afterwards*, with more effect. The desire of instructing the Jews, not the fear of offending them, was the motive with the apostles, for propounding first what was the easiest to be understood, and the most likely to be admitted.

10. But whatever the motive may have been with the apostles, for their conduct, you insist that the fact was, that the doctrine of the Trinity was not divulged by them: and of this you think you find a proof in this passage of Athanasius; in which you think it is confessed, that the apostles, in the opening of their ministry, were very reserved upon this article; and you observe, and I think not improperly, that the reasons for that reserve (if they ever subsisted) would operate till within a short time of the dispersion and death of the apostles. Whence you conclude, that if ever they divulged this doctrine, it must have been at so late a period, that the church, in consequence of their former silence upon the subjest, must have been fixed in the contrary persuasion.*

11. But what if the foundation of this whole argument should be rotten? What if the whole should be built on a misinterpretation of Athanasius? Athanasius affirms not, that the apostles, in any period of their ministry, kept the doctrine of our Lord's divinity a secret; or that they were reserved upon this, or any article of faith, with those who were so far converted as to be catechumens. In their first publick sermons, ad-

* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 43—44.

dressed to the unbelieving multitude, they were content to maintain, that Jesus, whom the Jews had crucified, was risen from the dead; without touching his divinity otherwise, than in remote allusions: but to suppose, that they carried their converts no greater length, is to suppose that their private instruction was not more particular than their publick: for this, you will find little support in Athanasius; or in Chrysostom; who is called upon, to corroborate the argument from the concessions of Athanasius.

12. But whatever the doctrine of the apostles might be; or whatever opinion Athanasius, or Chrysostom, might entertain concerning it; Athanasius, it seems acknowledges, that the first Jewish Christians were Unitarians. Οι τοτε Ιυδαιοι, "The Jews of that time," or, "The then Jews," is the name, by which the persons are described, who are said to have holden the erroneous belief of the mere humanity of the Messiah. Now, Sir, if "The then Jews," Οι τοτε Ιυδαιοι, may denote Jewish Christians, will you be pleased to inform me, what more precise expressions the holy father might have found, in the whole compass of the Greek language, to denote genuine Jewish Jews, had he had occasion to mention them? But the verbs, it seems, "in that part of the passage which mentions, *Christ being come of the seed of David*, and the *word being made flesh*, are not in the *future tense*."* In this remark, Sir, I cannot but admire the singular *caution* of the expression, "The verbs——are not in the future tense." It is true, they are not: but the most important of these

* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 42.

verbs, in that part of the passage which mentions the Messiah's coming, although it be not in the future form, carries a future signification—it is in the infinitive mood of the present tense; which often denotes an instant futurity, but never denotes time, either long since, or just now, past: this obtains in all the Greek verbs, but particularly in the verb ἔρχομαι; which, not only by use, but naturally, involves a notion of futurity even in the present tense. Ενομιζον τον Χριστον ψιλον ανθρωπον μονον——ἐρχεσθαι. "They thought the Christ was *a-coming* as a mere man only." This expression refers to the Messiah not as come, but as coming: another verb, I confess, which relates to the incarnation of the Word, is in a preterite tense, οὐδε ὁτι λογος σαρξ ἐγενετο ἐπιστευον. "Neither believed they, that the word *was made* flesh." ὁ λογος σαρξ ἐγενετο, "the word was made flesh," these are the words in which St John mentions the incarnation. The holy father, it is likely, chose to use the very words of the evangelist, in speaking of this mystery; and for that reason, he may have sacrificed somewhat of the accuracy of his syntax to the exactness of his quotation. The passage should be printed thus: οὐδε "ὁτι ὁ λογος σαρξ ἐγενετο ἐπιστευον. In this grammatical argument, your *prudence* appears, not only in the very guarded expressions, in which you have stated it; but in the declaration, with which it is prefaced, that you desire to lay no great stress upon it. What you have respect to in this passage, "is the obvious general tenor and spirit of it:"* indeed, Sir, you would do well to be cautious, upon all occasions, how you handle these

* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 42.

briars of criticism: let us return then to the general tenor of the passage.

13. You know, Sir, that Jews are twice mentioned in it. "The Jews of that age being deceived themselves, and having deceived the Gentiles." And again, "—— the blessed apostles —— taught what related to the humanity of our Saviour to the Jews." Is it your opinion, Sir, that they are the same, or different persons, who are mentioned under the name of Jews, in these two different clauses? If they are different persons, I desire to know, what circumstance or note of difference, you find in the author's expressions? If you find none, on what is your opinion of a difference founded? Or, not to entangle you again in grammatical disquisitions, I will for a moment suppose the persons different, and desire you to show me, what will then be the sense or coherence of the writer's argument? If you allow, that the same persons are designed in both places under the same name; I must desire you to remark, that the Jews, mentioned in the second instance, were persons who were "at any rate to be persuaded (*at any rate*, that is the force of ὁλως which you have erroneously rendered by the word *fully*) at any rate to be persuaded, from the actual state of things, and from the evidence of the miracles which had been wrought, that the Christ was come.*" Could these, Sir, be converted Jews? Could they be already Christians, in whom this general persuasion, "that the Christ was come," was yet to be wrought? Wanting this persuasion, they were

* Ινα ολως πεισαντες αυτους εκ των φαινομενων και γενομενων σημειων.

clearly Jews, whose conversion was not yet begun; and of the same description, since they were indeed the very same persons, were the Jews, to whom it is imputed, that they held the erroneous belief of the Messiah's mere humanity, and that they spread the like error among the Gentiles.

14. But the Gentiles, you say, who were thus misled, must have been Christian Gentiles; and by consequence the Jews, who misled them, were Jewish Christians.* But, Sir, whence is the certainty that Christian Gentiles were intended by Athanasius? It hangs upon this principle, that to any other Gentiles, the whole doctrine of a Messiah must have been uninteresting.† Have you forgotten, Sir, have you never known, or would you deny, what is not denied by candid infidels, that the expectation of a great deliverer, or benefactor of mankind, was universal even in the Gentile world, about the time of our Lord's appearance? If you acknowledge this, where is the improbability, that the general opinion concerning this personage, should be modified by the opinions which prevailed in Judea, which was the centre of the tradition? especially when it is considered, that the proselytes of the gate, made an easy channel of communication, between the Jews and the idolatrous Gentiles! but whatever you may be disposed to grant, or to deny, this argument is easily inverted, and turned against you. It hath been shown, that none but Jew Jews can be intended by Athanasius, when he speaks of the Jews as misleaders of the Gen-

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* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 41. † Ibid.

tiles—they were Gentile Gentiles, therefore, who were misled; for, from unbelieving Jews, Christians of the Gentiles would hardly take instruction.

15. Your last resource is, to flee for shelter to the authority of Beausobre. "The learned Beausobre, a Trinitarian, and therefore an unexceptionable judge in this case, quoting this very passage, does not hesitate to pronounce, that they were believing Jews, who were intended by the writer."* It is for you, Sir, to judge, what deference is due from you to the authority of Beausobre, for my own part, I shall not affect a modesty which I feel not, when the sense of a Greek sentence is the thing in question, if I have the writer upon my own shelf, or can find him upon my friend's, it is not much my practice to stand bowing at a distance to authorities; unless indeed it be the authority of a Casaubon, a Scaliger, or a Bentley: but these men would laugh, or they would storm, at your attempts to construe Greek, with Beausobre at your elbow. To construe Greek! I fear, Sir, they would think but lightly of your Latin erudition, after the specimen which you have given of it, in your attempt to wrest from my learned ally, his strong argument for the difference which we assert, in articles of faith, between the Nazarenes and the Ebionites. The feats of criticism which you have performed for this purpose, upon certain plain words of Jerome,† to draw them from the only meaning of which they are capable, had you been a Westminster man, were enough to bring old Busby from his grave: but, alas!

* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 42. † Ibid, p. 152—156.

Sir, you are not to be persuaded, though one should rise from the dead. I trust our readers are persuaded, that the argument from Athanasius* was, with great justice and propriety, placed among my specimens of insufficient proof.

I am, &c.

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* Of the testimonies of other writers, by which Dr Priestley attempts to confirm his argument from Athanasius, see the tenth of his second Letters to me, and my Remarks upon his second Letters, Part II. c. i. sec. 10—14.

LETTER TWELFTH.

In Reply to Dr Priestley's fifth; in which he moves certain chronological difficulties.—Himself chiefly concerned to find the solution.—His question divided.—The divinity of our Lord, preached from the very beginning, by the apostles.—St Stephen a martyr to this doctrine.—His dying ejaculations justify the worship of Christ.—Christ deified in the story of St Paul's conversion.—The divinity of Jesus ackowledged by the apostles, from the time when they acknowledged him for the Messiah.—Notions of a Trinity, and of the Deity of the Messiah, current among the Jews in the days of our Saviour.

DEAR SIR.

IN your fifth letter, you call upon me to assign the particular time, when the knowledge of our Lord's divinity, which, in the persuasion, that the apostles were taxed by the fathers with a reserve upon the subject, you are pleased to call "the great secret of Christ being not a mere man, but the eternal God;"* you call upon me to assign the time, when this great secret "was communicated first to the apostles, and then by them to

* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 55.

the body of Christians."* You "request my opinion" upon this question, with a certain air of triumph, which seems to imply, that, in your apprehension, I must be much at a loss to frame an opinion upon it, which may be consistent with my creed. But the truth is, that you are yourself the person most concerned to find the solution. Or, to express myself more accurately, the question splits into two, of which, the one concerns not me, and the other concerns not either of us.

2. When was the doctrine of our Lord's divinity, first published in the church by the apostles?

3. When was the knowledge of the thing, first conveyed to the minds of the apostles themselves?

4. These, Sir, are two distinct questions. Of the first, it is your concern, not mine, to seek the solution: for since I have clearly traced the belief of Christ's proper deity up to the apostolick age; unless you can assign the particular epocha of the publication, I have a right to conclude, that it was a part of the very earliest doctrine: nay, if you should even be able to assign some later time of its commencement, yet since that time must fall within the compass of the apostolick age, to which you are limited, by virtue of my proof from the epistle of St Barnabas, a question might indeed arise, which might be of difficult resolution—why was this doctrine, for a certain time, kept back? But this difficulty would not shake the credit of the doctrine; for since there is no reason to suppose, that any of the apostles, having once received the light of inspiration, were, in any future period of their lives, deprived of it,

* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 55.

any doctrine published by them, claims implicit credit, whatever might be the time of its first publication. A discovery that St John had made, in the last moments of his life, had been equally to be believed, as any thing that St Peter preached, in his first sermon, on the day of Pentecoast. You will therefore choose your own epocha, for the discovery of "the great secret." Place it, where it best may please you in the apostolick age; I will hold no argument with you upon the subject: In my own congregations, I shall think it my duty to bear my witness, that, from the very beginning of the gospel, the thing had been no secret: for proof from holy writ, I shall have recourse to those very passages of the apostolick history, from which you draw the contrary inference. I shall remind my hearers, that in St Peter's first publick sermon, when it was reasonable to keep to the general assertion, that Jesus was the Messiah, rather than to enter into the particulars which that character might involve; allusions are nevertheless used, which discover, that the mind of the speaker was strongly impressed with notions, which it was his policy to conceal. I shall particularly desire them to remark, that it is said of our Lord Jesus, that "it was not possible that he should be holden of death:"* the expressions clearly imply a physical impossibility: I shall bid them observe, that the great miracle of that day is said to be, an exertion of the power of Jesus exalted by God's right hand:† and I shall maintain, that the three persons are distinctly mentioned, in a manner which implies the divinity of each, "Jesus—being by the right

* Acts ii. 24. † Ibid. ii. 32, 33.

hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost"*—of the Father—παρα τυ πατρος —*The Father:* the substantive, with the article prefixed, describes a person, whose character it is to be the Father—Paternity is the property, which individuates the person: but from whom is the first principle thus distinguished? From his creatures? From them he were more significantly distinguished by the name of God. Not generally therefore from his creatures, but particularly, from the two other persons mentioned in the same period—Jesus and the Holy Ghost. And since this is his distinction, that he is the Father of that Son, from whom, together with himself, the Holy Ghost proceeds; it follows, that the interval, between him and them, is no more than relation may create; that the whole difference lies in personal distinctions, not in essential qualities. Thus I will ever reason, Sir, for the edification of my own flock, but with little hope of your conviction from St Peter's first sermon.

5. I shall always insist, Sir, that the blessed Stephen died a martyr to the DEITY of Christ. The accusation against him, you say, was "his speaking blasphemous things against the temple and the law†"—you have forgotten to add the charge of blasphemy "against Moses and against God."‡ The blasphemy against the temple and the law, probably consisted in a prediction, that the temple was to be destroyed, and the ritual law, of course, abolished: the blasphemy against Moses, was probably his assertion, that the authority of Moses was

* Acts ii 32, 33. † Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 60.
‡ Acts vi. 11.

inferior to that of Christ: but what could be the blasphemy against God? What was there in the doctrine of the apostles, which could be interpreted as blasphemy against God, except it was this, that they ascribed divinity to one, who had suffered publickly as a malefactor—that this was the blessed Stephen's crime, none can doubt, who attends to the conclusion of the story. He "looked up stedfastly into heaven," says the inspired historian, "and saw the glory of God," [that is, he saw the splendour of the Shechinah, for that is what is meant, when the glory of God is mentioned as something to be seen,] "and Jesus standing on the right hand of God"*—He saw the man, Jesus, in the midst of this divine light: his declaring what he saw,† the Jewish rabble understood, as an assertion of the divinity of Jesus: they stopped their ears; they overpowered his voice with their own clamours; and they hurried him out of the city, to inflict upon him the death, which the law appointed for blasphemers.‡ He died, as he had lived, attesting the deity of our crucified Master. His last breath was uttered in a prayer to Jesus, first for himself, and then for his murderers. "They stoned Stephen, calling upon *God*, and saying, Lord Jesus receive my spirit—and he cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."‖ It is to be noted, that the word *God* is not in the original text, which might be better rendered, thus; "They stoned Stephen, invocating and saying, &c." Jesus therefore was the God, whom the dying martyr invocated in his last ago-

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* Acts vii. 55. † Ibid. 56.
‡ Ibid. 57, 58. ‖ Ibid. 59, 60.

nies; when men are apt to pray, with the utmost seriousness, to him whom they conceive the mightiest to save.

6. It seems the holy Stephen, full, as we are informed he was in those trying moments, of the Holy Ghost, was not in the opinion which you are pleased to impute to me; but you will observe, that I disclaim it, that "the proper object of prayer, is God the Father."* This, you tell me, I cannot but acknowledge. That the Father is *a* proper object of prayer, God forbid that ever I should not acknowledge: that he is *the* proper object, in the sense in which you seem to make the assertion, in prejudice and exclusion of the other persons, God forbid that ever I should concede: I deny not, that there is an honour personally due to him as the Father; there is also an honour personally due to the Son, as the Son; and to the Spirit, as the Spirit: but our knowledge of the personal distinctions is so obscure, in comparison of our apprehension of the general attributes of the Godhead; that it should seem, that the Divinity [the το θειον] is rather to be generally worshipped, in the three persons jointly and indifferently, than that any distinct honours are to be offered to each separately. Prayer, however, for succour against external persecution, seems addressed with particular propriety to the Son.

7. When you deny, not only that any precept, but that any proper example is to be found in Scripture to authorise the practice;† you seem to have forgotten, be-

* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 81.
† Ibid.

side many other passages, the initial salutations of St Paul's epistles: St Stephen's "short ejaculatory address" you had not forgotten; but you say, "it is very inconsiderable:"* but, Sir, why is it inconsiderable? Is it because it was only an ejaculation? Ejaculations are often prayers of the most fervent kind; the most expressive of self-abasement and adoration:—Is it for its brevity that it is inconsiderable? What then is the precise length of words, which is requisite to make a prayer an act of worship? Was this petition preferred on an occasion of distress, on which a Divinity might be naturally invoked? Was it a petition for succour, which none but a Divinity could grant? If this was the case, it was surely an act of worship. Is the situation of the worshipper, the circumstance which, in your judgment, Sir, lessens the authority of his example? You suppose perhaps some consternation of his faculties, arising from distress and fear—the history justifies no such supposition: it describes the utterance of the final prayer, as a deliberate act of one who knew his situation, and possessed his understanding: after praying for himself, he kneels down to pray for his persecutors; and such was the composure with which he died, although the manner of his death was the most tumultuous and terrifying, that, as if he had expired quietly upon his bed, the sacred historian says, that "he fell asleep."† If therefore you would insinuate, that St Stephen was not himself, when he sent forth this "short ejaculatory address to Christ," the history

* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 81.
† Acts vii. 60.

refutes you. If he was himself, you cannot justify his prayer to Christ, while you deny that Christ is God, upon any principle that might not equally justify you, or me, in praying to the blessed Stephen. If St Stephen, in the full possession of his faculties, prayed to him who is no God; why do we reproach the pious Romanist, when he chaunts the litany of his saints? If the persuasion of Christ's divinity prompted the holy martyr's dying prayer; then there is no room to doubt, but that the assertion of Christ's divinity was the blasphemy, for which the Jews, hardened in their unbelief, condemned him.

8. Another instance, to which I ever shall appeal, of an early preaching of our Lord's divinity, though it may not conduce to your conviction, is the story of St Paul's conversion; in which, as it is twice related by himself, Jesus is deified in the highest terms. I know not, Sir, in what light this transaction may appear to you; to me, I confess, it appears to have been a repetition of the scene at the bush, heightened in terror and solemnity—Instead of a lambent flame, appearing to a solitary shepherd amid the thickets of the wilderness; the full effulgence of the Shechina, overpowering the splendour of the mid-day sun, bursts upon the commissioners of the Sanhedrim, on the publick road to Damascus, within a small distance of the city: Jesus speaks, and is spoken to, as the Divinity inhabiting that glorious light: nothing can exceed the tone of authority on the one side, the submission and religious dread upon the other: the recital of this story, seems to have been the usual prelude to the apostle's publick apologies; but it only proved the means of heightening the resentment of his incredulous countrymen.

9. These instances, Sir, will bear me out in the assertion, that our Lord's divinity was preached from the very beginning, till you can fix the first discovery to some later epocha: I am, therefore, not at all concerned in the solution of your first question.

10. The second, "when was the knowledge of our Lord's divinity first imparted to the minds of the apostles?" is wholly insignificant, and uninteresting to all parties: it concerns not me; because, with my notions of inspiration, I am obliged to believe what the inspired apostles taught, however late the time might be when they themselves received their information: it concerns not you; because, with your notions of inspiration, you are at liberty to dispute what the inspired apostles taught, whatever pretensions they may have to the earliest information. If the knowledge was infallible which they received from inspiration, it matters not how late; if not infallible, it matters not how early they received it: if no positive proof were extant, that the deity of Christ was an article of faith among the first Christians; the difficulty of assigning the precise time, when the apostles were first made aquainted with it, might be something of an objection against the antiquity of the doctrine, and against its truth; but in opposition to direct proof, the objection, were it founded, could have no weight.

11. Upon this question therefore, as the former, you must not take it amiss if I leave you to yourself. Choose any time, within the compass of each apostle's life, for the epocha of his illumination: I will hold no argument upon the subject; although I have an opinion upon the question, as upon the former, which I ever shall inculcate in my own congregation: and this, Sir, happens to be the

very reverse of that, which you imagine I must allow. "You must allow," you say to me, "that at first the apostles were wholly ignorant of this."* *At first* indeed, before their acquaintance with our Lord, or at least with the Baptist, they were ignorant, I believe, of every thing; but from their first acknowledgment of our Lord as the Messiah, they equally acknowledged his divinity: their faith, I believe, was but unsettled, as their notions of the Messiah's kingdom were certainly very confused, till the descent of the Holy Ghost; but so far as they believed in Jesus as the Messiah, in the same degree they understood and acknowledged his divinity: the proof, which I have to produce of this, from holy writ, consists of too many particulars, to be distinctly enumerated in the course of our present correspondence; I shall mention two, which, to any but a decided Unitarian, will be very striking: Nathaniel's first profession, and Peter's consternation at the miraculous draught of fishes. It was in Nathaniel's very first interview with our Lord, that he exclaimed, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God! thou art the king of Israel!"† and this declaration was drawn from Nathaniel, by some particulars in our Lord's discourse, which he seems to have interpreted as indications of Omniscience. When Simon Peter saw the number of fishes taken, at a single draught, when the net was cast at our Lord's command, after a night of fruitless toil; "he fell down at the knees of Jesus, saying, depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."‡ Peter's consternation was evi-

* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 56.
† John i. 49. ‡ Luke v. 8.

dently of the same sort, of which we read in the worthies of earlier ages, upon any extraordinary appearance of the light of the Shechinah, which was founded on a notion, that a sinful mortal might not *see God and live*. These, and many other passages of the evangelical history, discover that our Lord's associates, although it was not till after his ascension, that the Holy Ghost led them into all truth; had an early apprehension, of something more than human in his character. Nor indeed were early intimations of it wanting: in the first annunciation of his birth, by the angelick host; in the Baptist's declarations; and in our Lord's own assertions of a power to forgive sins, and of an authority to dispense with ordinances of divine appointment; and in his claim to be the proper Son of God, which the unbelieving Jews ever understood, as an express deification of his own person.

12. But Judas Iscariot, you think, "could not possibly have formed a deliberate purpose of betraying our Lord,"* had the belief of his divinity been general among the apostles, before his crucifiction: or, had any such pretension been set up, which had not gained belief, Judas would have taken advantage of the imposition, and would have made a discovery of it to the prejudice of our Lord. It should seem, Sir, that you think your own cause almost desperate, if you would desire that Judas Iscariot should be admitted as an evidence for you, or as an advocate—but, what if your cause should turn out to be, what Judas Iscariot himself would scruple to undertake? I would not willingly

* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 58.

be the apologist of that traitor; but I am inclined to think, that, traitor as he was, his intentions went not to the mischief which he effected: it was rather perhaps his meaning, to cheat the chief priests of their money, than actually to sell his Master's life. When he bargained to lead them, for a certain sum, to the place of our Lord's retirement; he thought, perhaps, that he might safely trust to his Master's power, to repel any attack upon his person. This is very consistent with a belief of our Lord's divinity; as the most dishonourable designs are often found, to consist with the truest speculative principles: that he meant not the mischief which ensued, may be presumed, from the remorse which followed, and the vengeance which, in despair, he executed upon himself. But I care little about his testimony, only, I think, that, with the devils he might believe and tremble, and trembling, might be still a devil.

13. After all, Sir, I might have spared so particular an answer as I have given to your fifth letter; in the conclusion of it, you furnish me with a short reply, of which I might have availed myself. "Had there been any pretence," you say, "for imagining that the Jews in our Saviour's time had any knowledge of the doctrine of the Trinity, and that they expected the second person in it, in the character of their Messiah, the question I propose to you would have been needless." * Then, Sir, the question which you propose to me, is needless. The Jews, in Christ's days, had notions of a Trinity in the Divine nature: they expected the sec-

* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 64.

ond person, whom they called the Logos, to come as the Messiah: for the proof of these assertions, I refer you to the work of the learned Dr Peter Allix, entitled, *The Judgment of the Ancient Jewish Church against the Unitarians*, a work which, it is to be hoped, Sir, you will carefully *look through*, before you send abroad your intended view of the doctrine of the first ages concerning Christ.* That you will be convinced by Dr Allix's proof, I have indeed little hope; I shall produce, however, another authority, to which you will perhaps be more inclined to pay regard: the authority of a learned Unitarian of the last century, who wrote in vindication of a former Unitarian work, of great fame, called *The Naked Gospel*. The Naked Gospel, you know was printed at Oxford, in the year 1690, and was burnt the same year, by order of the convocation. The anonymous author of the *Historical Vindication*, was supposed to be Le Clerc; he it is, who says in his preface, that the platonick enthusiasm crept first into the Jewish, afterwards into the Christian church—then he tells his readers, how the Jews picked up their Platonism, of which, he says, the principal doctrines were two: the one, that of the preexistence of souls; the other, that of the Divine Trinity. These, he says, were the opinions of the Jews in the days of our Saviour and his apostles: and hence, perhaps, it hath come to pass, that, as the learned have observed, certain Platonick phrases and expressions are to be found in the New Testament, especially, in St John's Gospel. You, Sir, and this Unitarian brother, seem to agree but ill in your

* Preface to Letters, p. xviii.

notions of the doctrine of the first ages. He thought the doctrine of the Trinity one of the ancient corruptions of Judaism; which, in laying the foundations of Christianity, the heaven-taught builders, some how or other, forgot to do away: you have discovered, that every notion of the Trinity, whatever may be fancied with respect to more ancient times, was obliterated from the minds of the Jews, in our Saviour's time.* I believe, Sir, I shall never sit down to the task, which you desire me to undertake,—a translation of the works of Bishop Bull:† for as his argument is not for the unlearned, the labour would be thrown away—a work which might be more generally edifying, and in which I might engage, if it were not that I really grudge every moment which I give to controversy, would be,—a harmony of the Unitarian divines.

14. You will ask me, whence was the offence, which the assertion of our Lord's divinity, by my own confession, gave the Jewish people, if divinity made a part of their own notion of the Messiah's character? I answer, the deification of the Messiah was not that which gave offence, but the assertion, that a crucified man was that divine person: and before his crucifixion, the meanness of his birth gave an offence, less in degree, but of the same kind.

I am, &c.

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* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 64.
† Ibid. p. 113.

LETTER THIRTEENTH.

In Reply to Dr Priestley's sixth.—Dr Priestley's ignorance of the true principles of Platonism, appears in his disquisitions concerning matter and spirit.—The equality and unity of the three principles of the Platonists.—Dr Priestley's peculiar sense of the word personification, *not perceived either by the archdeacon, or the reviewer.—The outline, however, of Dr Priestley's work, not misrepresented by the archdeacon.—The conversion of an attribute into a substance, differs not from a creation out of nothing.—Never taught by the Platonists.—The eternity of the Logos, independent of any supposed eternity of the world.—Not discarded therefore by the converted Platonists.—Dr Priestley's arguments, from the analogy between the divine Logos and human reason, answered.—The archdeacon abides by his assertion, that Dr Priestley hath misrepresented the Platonick language.—The archdeacon's interpretation of the Platonists rests not on his own conjecture, but on the authority of Athenagoras.—Confirmed by other authorities.—Dr Priestley's quotations from Tertullian considered.—From Lactantius.*

DEAR SIR.

YOU must forgive me, if I confess to you, that so long since as when I first read your disquisitions concerning matter and spirit, I formed no very high opinion

of your learning in the Platonick philosophy. What gave me my first suspicion, as I well remember, was a surprise which you express, that a certain French writer should speak of the idea of a circle, as itself, not round ;* and of the ideas of extended things, as not extended. Your apprehension, that ideas could not be divisible, unless they are extended,† heightened my suspicion, which became something more than suspicion, when I found you speaking of the soul's need of *a repository for her ideas,‡ especially during sleep ;* as if ideas were things to be locked up, with our china, in a cupboard. Dr Priestley, I said to myself, confounds ideas with the impressions of external objects, on the material sensory : which impressions are, in truth, as much external to the mind, as the objects which make them : what pity, that he hath not been more conversant with the Platonists ! These previous indications, of your deficiency in this branch of learning, in some measure prepared me for what I was to find, in your *History of the Philosophical Doctrine concerning the soul ;* insomuch, that I read your assertion, that " Plato's philosophy was the oriental system, with very little variation,"‖ without indignation ; because I considered it, as the reproach of an enemy, whom better information might make a friend. I was indeed surprised at your want of information in this particular instance; because Mosheim, whose authority as an historian, you seem to hold in due respect, indisposed, as he is in general, to be partial to the Platonists, hath however so far done

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* Disquisitions, p. 39.
† Ibid. p. 37, 38.
‡ Ibid. p. 79. 93.
‖ Ibid. p. 274.

them justice, as to point out the total discordance, in principle at least, between the sober philosophy of Plato, and the extravagancies of the Gnosticks; whose principles were those of the oriental system. After this, Sir, it gives me no surprise at all, that you should now assert, "that it was never imagined, that the three component members of the Platonick Trinity, are either equal to each other, or, strictly speaking, one."* They are, Sir, more strictly speaking, one, than any thing in nature of which unity may be predicated. No one of them can be supposed without the other two. The second and third being, the first is necessarily supposed; and the first (Αγαθον) being, the second and third, (Νους & Ψυχη) must come forth. Concerning their equality, I will not say, that the Platonists have spoken with the same accuracy which the Christian fathers use; but they include the three principles in the Divine nature, in the το Θειον; and this notion implies the same equality, which we maintain; at the same time I confess, that the circumstance of their equality, was not always strictly adhered to by the younger Platonists, for reasons which I have explained.†

2. The want of perspicuity, is a fault in writing, of which indeed, Sir, you are little guilty; it is the more extraordinary, that your *personification* of the Logos, should not be distinctly understood, either by myself, or by my learned ally: for my own part, I confess, I had not the least apprehension, that you used the word *personification* in any other than its usual sense; till, in

* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 99.
† See Charge V. sec. 5.

your reply to the animadversions of my learned ally, you distinguished between the personification of the Logos, which you impute to Justin, and the earlier doctrines of the Gnosticks.* By personification, I had no suspicion that you meant any thing more than a grammatical *prosopopeia;* which you seemed to think had been used both by Plato and St John, in speaking of the divine attribute of wisdom. Certainly, Sir, you express yourself in your history, as if you thought, that a literal acceptation of such figured language was the occasion, that a mere attribute was mistaken for a real person, first in the academy, and afterwards in the church: and that this error led to another, still founded on a literal interpretation of figurative expressions: the expressions in which St John describes, as you conceive, the extraordinary degree in which wisdom and power were conferred on Christ, being understood as assertions, that Christ was that very person, which was supposed to have been previously described by the evangelist, as a branch of the Divinity. I thought, Sir, that you conceived that a mere grammatical *prosopopeia* had been, in this way, the first step towards the deification of Christ: upon looking again into the second section of your history, I see no great reason to be ashamed of my mistake—I believe, Sir, that, without the assistance of the comment, which your Reply to the Monthly Reviewer furnishes, no reader of your work would discover any other meaning in your expressions. It seems, however, that the word *personification*, is a new term of theology, invented by you, for a doctrine which is

* Reply to Monthly Review for June, sec. 5.

also of your own invention, though you are pleased to give the credit of it to the Platonick fathers: the doctrine of the conversion of an attribute into a person; which was supposed, you say, by its first advocates, to take place immediately before the creation of the world, but being afterwards "carried farther back, namely, to all eternity, it led to the present doctrine of the Trinity."* The distinction between this personification of the Logos, and the earlier doctrines of the Gnosticks, is, it seems, an important feature in the great outline of your work. The outline of your work, as sketched by yourself, is briefly this.—The exaltation of the person of Jesus Christ began with the Gnosticks, who maintained the preexistence of human souls: When their errors were exploded, the personification was adopted—the Arian doctrine was subsequent to this; and it was after all these, that, from improvements upon the doctrine of personification, the present doctrine of the Trinity was brought out.† It is a heavy accusation against my learned ally and me, that we have not sufficiently attended to these distinctions; and the omissions shows, that "we have never formed a right conception of what we undertook to exhibit."‡

3. Every writer, must be allowed to be the best interpreter of his own expressions: but in the sense in which I am now taught to understand the personification of the Logos, I cannot perceive, Sir, with what propriety it is called the first step towards the deification

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* Reply to Monthly Review for June, p. 34, 35.

† Ibid.

‡ Ibid. p. 35; and Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 66.

of Christ; since the doctrines of the Gnosticks, which you maintain to be more ancient, had, in your judgment, the same tendency—I am sometimes inclined to suspect, that you are apt yourself to fluctuate between your own, and the vulgar sense, of personification.

4. But although I should allow, that I missed the sense of a particular expression; I am not sensible, that I misconceived, or misrepresented, your account of the ancient opinions: you certainly make the Unitarian doctrine, the general opinion of the first Christians—In the second age you allow, that something of divinity was ascribed to Christ; but you think it was a divinity of an inferior kind, including neither necessity, nor eternity, of a distinct personal existence: I therefore misrepresented not the great outline of your work, when I said, that the first race of Christians were, in your opinion, Unitarians in the strictest sense of the word; the second, Arians:* this is the sum of your account, stated, not in your words, but in my own. You complain, however, that I "have misconceived your idea"†—you inform me, that "the Platonizing Christians were not Arians; that it is well known that they were not Arians, but the orthodox who Platonized."‡

5. Sir, I am very sensible, that the Platonizers of the second century, were the orthodox of that age—I have not denied this: on the contrary, I have endeavoured to show, that their Platonism brings no imputation upon their orthodoxy. The advocates of the Catholick faith, in modern times, have been too apt to take

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* Charge I. sec. 1. † Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 66.
‡ Ibid.

alarm at the charge of Platonism: I rejoice and glory in the opprobrium—I not only confess, but I maintain, not a perfect agreement, but such a similitude, as speaks a common origin, and affords an argument in confirmation of the Catholick doctrine, from its conformity to the most ancient and universal traditions. Nor is this the only article, in which heathen antiquity, however you may slight the argument, by the vestiges, which are to be traced even in idolatrous rites, of the patriarchal history and the patriarchal creed, bears its testimony to revelation. But, Sir, I well know, that these Platonizers of the second century, were far more ancient than Arius: nor did I mean to charge you with the absurdity of maintaining a contrary opinion; I thought that the notion which you express, of what was orthodoxy in the second century, was conveyed in a single word; when it was said, that you represent the Christians of the second race as Arians; that is, as Arians in belief; because the divinity which you suppose to have been ascribed by them to Christ, was only of that secondary sort, which Arius and his followers, in a later age, allowed. But to convict me of an error in this representation of your opinion, you now set up a distinction, between the opinions which you would ascribe to the early Platonists, and the Arian tenets: "The Logos of the Platonizers, you say, was an attribute of the Father, and not any thing that was created out of nothing, as the Arians held Christ to have been."* However, when this distinction hath served the purpose of convicting me of one error, it is cleared away again to convict me of another:

* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 66.

this Logos of the Platonists, I am told, "was originally nothing more than a property of the Divine mind, which assumed a separate personal character in time."* This is the same notion which is expressed in your history, in these words. "All the early fathers speak of Christ, as not having existed always, except as reason exists in man, *viz.* as an attribute of the Deity."† And the assumption of a personal character, seems to be the same thing, which in your history you call "the conversion of a mere attribute into a thinking substance:"‡ indeed, it is not easy to conceive, how a personal character may be assumed, otherwise than by being made a person—now, what the difference may be, between a making out of nothing, and the conversion of a mere attribute into a substance; or how a person made out of an attribute, may differ from a person made out of nothing—I would rather, Sir, that you than I, should take the trouble to explain: if this was the difference between the doctrines of the early Platonizers and the Arians, and this is the whole difference which you put between them, they might pass, I think, for the same: and your account of the Platonick orthodoxy, was not misrepresented by me, when I said, that you made it the same thing, the same in form, not in time, with Arianism.

6. But, Sir, I maintain, that this is an erroneous and injurious account of the Platonick Christians: this conversion of an attribute into a substance, was never taught by them; nor by any, except the Sabellians, and those earlier visionaries described by Justin Martyr, who

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* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 72.
† Hist. of Corrup. p. 42. ‡ Ibid. p. 40.

imagined occasional emissions and absorptions of the Divine Logos; "which opinion (you say) was not very remote from the Unitarian doctrine."* I am happy, Sir, to be informed by you, that the Unitarian doctrine approaches to opinions so mysterious: I thought, that to be clear of mysteries, had been its particular recommendation; I now find, that were I even to turn Unitarian, I should have mysteries to digest: and mysteries much too hard for my digestion: I will, therefore, adhere to my creed, in which I know no mystery to be compared with this notion, of a thing which may be a person, and no person, by fits and starts. But for any production of the Logos, by a conversion, either permanent or occasional, of an attribute into a thinking substance; I still maintain, that, were the thing conceivable, the Platonists were likely to be the last to adopt it: because a created Logos, to use my former expression, had been no less an absurdity in the academy, than it is an impiety in the church: and the notion, that this doctrine took its rise among the Platonists, betrays an entire ignorance of the genuine principles of their school."†

7. You tell me, that "I discover in these animadversions, a total ignorance of what you have asserted.—That you have nowhere said, that either the Platonists, or the Platonizing Christians, held, that the Logos was created, or that it had ever not existed."‡ What then have you said? You said in your History, that "All the early fathers speak of Christ, as not having existed

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* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 73.
† Charge IV. sec. 4.
‡ Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 72.

always, except as——an attribute of the Deity :"* that they taught " the conversion of this attribute into a substance"†—and what is it you say now? You say now that the Platonizing Christians held, that " whereas the Logos was originally nothing more than a property of the Divine mind, it assumed a separate personal character in time."‡ Be pleased, Sir, to explain the difference between this conversion of attribute into substance, or property into person, and a creation out of nothing.

8. You admit, however, that the eternity of the Logos was a doctrine of Platonism: but you attempt to assign a reason, why the converted Platonists, when they entered into the church, must have parted with this opinion: " the Logos (you say) of the Platonists, had, in their opinion, always had a personal existence, because Plato supposed creation to have been eternal; but this was not the opinion of the Platonizing Christians, who held, that the world was not eternal; and thefore, retaining as much of Platonism, as was consistent with that doctrine, they held, that there was a time when the Father was *alone*, and without a Son."‖ Sir, if I thought proper to deny your assertion, that Plato supposed creation to have been eternal; it would require much more skill in the Platonick philosophy, than is to be gotten at second hand, from modern authors, who pretend to give an account of it, to confute the proof which I might bring to the contrary, from Plato's own writings. But as the younger Platonists generally, held

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* Hist. of Corrup. p. 42. † Ibid. p. 40.
‡ Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 72. ‖ Ibid.

the eternity of creation; and Plato, in some parts of his writings, seems to favour that opinion, notwithstanding what he says to the contrary in the Timæus; I shall take no advantage of the uncertainty of your assumption: indeed, it would be sufficient for your purpose, were your argument sound in other parts, that the opinion of the world's eternity was current in that school, in which the Christian Platonists were trained, and was probably entertained by them all, before their conversion: still your conclusion will not stand, unless you can prove, that the Platonists, whether Christian or Pagan, held the Logos to be a part of the world, or thought the eternity of the Logos, a consequence only of the world's eternity; whereas, neither the one nor the other of these principles would have been allowed, even by those Platonists who deemed the world eternal. The eternity of the world seemed to them, a consequence of that eternal activity, which they ascribed to the Deity; that is, to the three principles of Goodness [Τ'αγαθον], Intelligence [Νους], and Vitality [Ψυχη]: and chiefly to the two last: for to the first principle, they ascribed indeed an activity, but of a very peculiar kind; such as might be consistent with an undisturbed immutability. He acts, μενων εν εαυτω ηθει, by a simple indivisible unvaried energy; which as it cannot be broken into a multitude of distinct acts, cannot be adapted to the variety of external things; on which therefore the First Good acts not, either to create or to preserve them, otherwise than through the two subordinate principles. The eternal activity therefore of the Deity, and by consequence, the existence of Intellect and the vital principle, in which alone the Divine nature is active upon external things, was necessary in this system to the eternity of the world;

and this eternal activity, was supposed to be the consequence of that goodness of the Deity, which could not suffer that to be delayed, which, because he hath done it, appears to be fit to be done: the world therefore, however the fact may actually be, might or might not have been eternal: if it hath been eternal, it hath been such, not by its own nature, but by the choice of a free agent, who might have willed the contrary. But intellect and the vital principle, have been eternal by necessity, as branches of the divinity—these therefore must have been eternal, even if the world had never been, although the world could not be without them; and this, upon the principles of those philosophers, who deemed the world eternal. The converted Platonists, therefore, when upon the authority of revelation, they discarded the notion of the world's eternity, would not find themselves obliged to discard with this the eternity of Intellect, or the Logos: for that stands upon another ground, and is indeed eternity of quite another kind.

9. But whatever they might be at liberty to do, you are confident of the fact, that the eternal existence of the Logos, as a person, is a notion which was discarded by the Christian Platonists, when they became Christian. Your proof is drawn from the analogy which some of them imagined between the Divine Logos, and the reason of the human soul, or, between the Logos and human speech; and from the doctrine of the conversion of an attribute into a substance, which you persuade yourself, they deliver in the most unequivocal language.

10. "That the Logos of the Father, the same that constituted the second person in the Trinity, exactly

corresponded to the Logos, or reason, or word of man, was the idea of Athanasius himself:"* in proof of this assertion, you bring a passage from Athanasius, in which, to prevent, as it should seem, a conclusion which the unwary might draw from the agreement of the name, instead of the exact correspondence which you may imagine; he shows the great difference between the Divine Logos and human speech. Tertullian, in a passage cited in your history,† sets up something of an analogy between the Divine Logos and the human reason: this analogy, if I mistake not, hath been pursued by the schoolmen, with their peculiar subtlety; and, as far as it obtains, is well explained by the learned Dr Charles Leslie, in his dialogues, entitled, *The Socinian Controversy discussed:* Tertullian, to prevent the very conclusion which you draw from this analogy, that the Logos was at some time or another a mere attribute, remarks, that nothing empty and unsubstantial can proceed from God; for the Divine nature, admitting neither quality nor accident, every thing belonging to it must be substance. This argument is ably stated in the work just mentioned, the dialogues of the learned Dr Leslie.

11. For the conversion of an attribute into a substance, I abide by my assertion, that it is the offspring of your own imagination, and can only have arisen from a misapprehension of the language of the Platonick fathers: it is true, that they speak of the Son's generation as taking place at a particular time, as commen-

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* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 69.
† Hist. of Corrup. p. 53.

cing indeed with the creation: But by this generation, they understood not any beginning of his personal existence, but the projection of his energies; the display of his powers, in the production of external substances.

12. You reply, "that any mere external display of powers should ever be termed generation, is so improbable, from its manifest want of analogy to any thing that ever was called generation before or since, that such an abuse of words is not to be supposed of these writers, or of any person, without very positive proof; and, in this case," you say to me, "you advance nothing but a mere conjecture, destitute of any thing that can give it a colour of probability."* This sentence, Sir, only finishes the proof, if it was before defective, of your incompetency in the subject. It shows, that you have so little acquaintance with Platonism, that your mind cannot readily apprehend a Platonick notion, when it is clearly set before you: what you take for my mere conjecture, is the express assertion of Athenagoras, in the very passage which you have quoted: and Athenagoras, I should think, might be a sufficient evidence of his own meaning—he says,—that the Son was called the Son, as being the first offspring of the Father —not because he was ever made, but because he went forth to act upon material substances.† He explains the generation of the Son, by declaring first what it signifies not; then, what it signifies. A making, it signifies not: a going forth, according to Athenagoras, it

* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 70.
† Charge IV. sec. 5.

signifies. That the generation of the Son of God is something figuratively called a generation, will hardly be denied—Athenagoras declares what he understood by the figure; and the interpretation which he puts upon it, seems to have been general among the writers who came from the same school—it rests not however upon any conjecture, but upon his authority: the fault, Sir, is not in me, if you cannot perceive his meaning when it is rendered in our own language. You object a want of analogy, between the figure, and the thing which it is supposed to represent: this, I think, with an Unitarian, should be but a slight objection; since the whole language of the New Testament, in their view of it, is made up of figures, in which analogy is wanting: but the question is not, what may be the natural sense of the word generation, when it is applied to the Son of God, or what may be its true sense when it is so applied in Scripture; but in what sense it was accepted by the Platonizing Christians: I affirm, upon the authority of Athenagoras, that it was understood by them, when they speak of it as taking place at a certain time, not of a beginning of the Son's existence, but of a display of his powers: to confute this assertion, instead of critical reasoning upon the propriety of the language, you must produce some better authority upon your own side, than that of Athenagoras, whose testimony is express and full, on mine.

13. But, for the sense which these Platonists put upon the word generation, I am not solicitous to defend it—I have spoken of it in my Charge as a conceit; and I have spoken of the attempt, to put a determinate sense upon a figurative expression, of which no particular exposition can be drawn from holy writ, as highly

presumptuous;* still, Sir, the Platonists are not without a defence, against what you have found to object to the propriety of the expression, in the sense in which they understand it—You say to me, "Since according to your hypothesis, the Logos was always an intelligent person, he must have exerted his intellectual faculties, in some way or other from all eternity, as much as the Father himself:"† It is true, Sir. But it was not an exertion of his faculties *in some way or other*, but the first exertion of them on external things, that the Platonick fathers understood by generation. This was the exertion in which the Son came forth. Before this, he energized only within himself: he lay, as it were, unissued in the bosom of the Father. You go on—— "was the exertion of the faculties of the Father in the creation of the world, ever called a generation of the Father?——and yet, according to you, this language must have been equally proper with respect to the Father."‡——Not according to me, Sir. I hold with the Platonists, that the Father's faculties are not exerted on external things, otherwise than through the Son and Holy Ghost: these two persons being, as it were, the two faculties, in which alone the Divine nature is active on created things: although I approve not the attempt to determine the meaning of a figure, which the holy Scriptures leave undetermined; yet I cannot allow, that the language, in that interpretation of it which I ascribe to the Platonists, is as improper of the Son as it would be of the Father: I perceive indeed no impro-

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* Charge IV. sec. 6.

† Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 71. ‡ Ibid.

priety in it, as applied to the Son; I only complain of the want of authority from holy writ.

14. Still I maintain, that the thing in question is, not the propriety or impropriety of an expression; but the fact, how an expression was used and understood by certain writers: it were endless to accumulate authorities; but if the single testimony of Athenagoras is not sufficient, I will produce two more; to one of which, at least, I expect that you will pay some regard, because it is given by hereticks. The first, is that of Constantine the Great—the emperor may be numbered among the Platonizing Christians; because, as you have yourself observed, he alleges the authority of Plato, in support of the Catholick doctrine: now Constantine the Great, in his epistle to the Nicomedians, written after the Nicene council, uses these expressions——"he was begotten, or rather he himself came forth (being even ever in the Father) for the setting in order of the things which were made by him."* Here the emperor expounds generation, by coming forth: he thinks, "that he came forth," the more significant expression: and he asserts the eternal coexistence of the Son and Father. The other testimony, on which I should more rely for your conviction, if I could hope that any testimony might produce it, is that of Arius the hæresiarch, and the priests and deacons of his faction. In their common letter to Alexander, bishop of Alexandria, (the seat you know of the Platonick school,) stating what they believed, and what they disbelieved; among the arti-

* Εγεννηθη, μαλλον δε προηλθεν αυτος, και παντοτε εν τω πατρι ων, επι την των απ αυτου πεποιημενων διακοσμησιν.

cles which they disbelieved is this: "that the Son, previously existing, was afterwards begotten:"* And it is remarkable, that this stands last in a list of articles of disbelief. In the preceding articles, their disbelief is justified, by a reference of the rejected propositions to certain hereticks, as the first authors of them: of one to Valentinus, of another to Manes, and another to Sabellius: but this article, is not referred to any heretick; which argues that they were conscious, that this was the opinion of the church: it is true, they immediately subjoin, that "Alexander himself, had often publickly declared against those who introduced such things;" as if this had been one of the things, which Alexander condemned: but the falsehood of this insinuation appears, from another epistle of Arius to Eusebius of Nicomedia, to whom as a friend, the heretick may be supposed to write without art or disguise. In this epistle he mentions the proposition, "that the Son is coexistent with God, without generation,"† as one of the articles of Alexander's publick doctrine, to which he could not give assent. You will find both these epistles, in Epiphanius's account of the Arians.

15. From these testimonies it is indisputable, that the early Platonists, by the generation of the Son, when they speak of it as taking place at a particular time, understand not any beginning of his existence: and it appears that it was the language of the orthodox, at the time of the Nicene council, that the existence of the Son, was prior to his generation, and independent of it;

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* ουδε τον οντα προτερον υστερον γενηθεντα.

† Επειδη ου συμφωνουμεν αυτω δημοσια λεγοντι——συνπαρχει ὁ υιος αγεννητως τω θεω.

coeval indeed with the eternal Father's. Later writers distinguish three generations: the incarnation; the going forth to the business of creation; and an eternal generation; which last, is only a name for the unknown manner, in which the Son's existence is connected with the Father's. Tertullian, in the passage which you have quoted in your History,* which you call upon me so particularly to consider,† only speaks the language of his times, and never dreamed that he should be understood to assert a beginning of the Son's existence, when he said, "that the nativity of the word was perfected, when God said, *Let there be Light.*"

16. You now, Sir, produce another passage of Tertullian, to prove "how ready the Platonizing Christians were, to revert to the idea of an attribute of God, in their use of the word Logos:"‡ but the passage, instead of proving this readiness of the Platonizing Christians, proves the readiness of the Pagan philosophers, to apply this same name to a person; even to the Maker of the Universe.

17. You call upon me to consider also a passage cited in your History, from Lactantius, whose orthodoxy, you tell me, I cannot question.‖ Sir, you are not more inaccurate in your citations from the ancients, than unfortunate in your divinations about the principles of your contemporaries, and the concessions which they will be willing to make to you:—the orthodoxy of Lactantius I shall question, I shall deny: he had not perhaps the dispositions of an heretick—he did not set himself to

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* Vol. I. p. 38—40. † Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 67.
‡ Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 76. ‖ Ibid.

oppose, what he knew to be the approved doctrine of the church—but his talent was eloquence, which he possessed in a high degree, and his learning was in mythological antiquity: in philosophy, his information was small; in divinity, he was a child: the common places of morality and natural religion, he touches with elegance; and he inveighs against the Pagan superstition, in a masterly strain: but in his attempt to philosophize, or to expound articles of faith, he is contemptible:—in the seventh chapter of his first book, he ascribes a beginning to the existence of the eternal Father—no wonder then, that he should ascribe a beginning to the Son's existence:—you are welcome, Sir, to any advantage you may be able to derive, from the authority of such a writer.

18. I persuade myself I have now shown, that your objection to the Catholick doctrine, founded on its supposed Platonism, and your argument for what I shall call the Arianism of the Platonizers from Athenagoras, are well entitled to the places which they hold among my specimens of insufficient proof, of which the one is the sixth, and the other the eighth in order.

I am, &c.

LETTER FOURTEENTH.

In Reply to Dr Priestley's eighth.—The archdeacon's supposition, that the first Ebionites worshipped Christ, defended.—His supposition, that Theodotus was the first person who taught the Unitarian doctrine at Rome, defended.

DEAR SIR.

OF all my nine specimens of insufficient proof, selected from the first book of your History, the fifth is the only one, about which any doubt is likely to remain (except with yourself) that it was properly alleged: for the seventh and the ninth, you give up; and the other six have been considered.

2. My fifth specimen, was your misrepresentation of Eusebius, a writer of acknowledged veracity and candour, whom you very rashly charge with inconsistency, and even with unfairness; because, in his account of Theodotus the hæresiarch, who appeared at Rome about the year 190, he cites another writer, who says, that this Theodotus was the first who taught the mere humanity of Christ; whereas it appears from his own history, that the Ebionites, who held the mere humanity of Christ, were far more ancient than Theodotus. Admitting the antiquity of the Ebionites, I maintain, that Eusebius is so easily reconciled with the author

whom he cites, that the difference between them, is no just ground to tax the veracity of either. It is very certain, that Theodotus maintained the mere humanity of Christ in the grossest sense: in that gross and shocking sense, in which it is at this day taught by yourself and Mr Lindsey: It is not certain that the Ebionites, before Theodotus, had gone further than to deny our Lord's original divinity: they probably, like Socinus, admitted some unintelligible exaltation of his nature after his resurrection, which rendered him the object of worship; if this was the case, Theodotus might justly claim the honour of being the first assertor of our Lord's humanity, being indeed the first who made humanity the whole of his condition: by this very natural supposition, that the Ebionites were Unitarians of a milder sort than Theodotus, Eusebius might have been reconciled with himself, had it been his own assertion, that Theodotus was the first, who taught the mere humanity of Christ.*

3. But this is not the assertion of Eusebius, but of another writer cited by Eusebius: now, since Theodotus broached his heresy at Rome, it is very probable, that the writer cited by Eusebius was a Roman, and that he treated of the state of religion in the western church, and especially at Rome, where Theodotus was probably the first, who, in any sense, taught the mere humanity of Christ.†

4. You tell me, in your eighth letter, that the difference which I put between Theodotus and Ebion, is ad-

* See Charge I. sec. 16. † See Charge, p. 43.

vanced upon my own authority:* truly, Sir, I think that a supposition, which reconciles a writer of established credit with himself, or, which is nearly the same thing, with another writer whom he cites with approbation, should need no great authority to support it; unless it be contrary to known fact, in which case indeed no authority might support it, or in itself improbable: Now, Sir, can you prove, that Christ was not worshipped by the original Ebionites? Can you prove this, I would ask, by explicit evidence? For as for that kind of proof, in which you so much delight, which is drawn by abstract reasoning from general and precarious maxims; it is of no more significance in history, than testimony would be in mathematicks; to think to demonstrate a fact by syllogism, is not less absurd, than to go about to establish a geometrical theorem by an *affidavit*: excuse me, if I insist upon the difference, in the nature of things, between historick certainty and scientifick truth: I apprehend, an inattention to this distinction hath misled many, and hath been the cause of much fruitless labour in many subjects. Scientifick truth can only be established by abstract reasoning—testimony can, in science, produce nothing more than probability—in history, it is quite the reverse; abstract reasoning can never go beyond a probability: proof must arise from evidence: and the reason of this is plain—the principles of scientifick truth are all within the mind itself: the truths of history, are the occurrences of the external world: neglecting this necessary distinction, the great Berkley questioned the existence of the

* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 103.

material world, because he found it incapable of demonstration; and I have known many seek a confirmation of geometrical theorems from experiment. Now to return to my subject: have you evidence, for that is the only proof to which, in this case, the judicious will attend; have you evidence, that Christ was not worshipped by the Ebionites? If you have none, my supposition is not contrary to known fact: is it in itself improbable, since all innovations have a progress, and the divinity of Christ was the belief, and the worship of Christ the practice, of the first ages, that presumptuous men would begin to question the ground, on which his right to worship might be thought to stand, before they abandoned the worship to which they had been long habituated? Hath not this been the progress of the corruption (you will call it reformation, but I must speak my own language) in later times? Socinus, although he denied the original divinity of our Lord, was nevertheless a worshipper of Christ, and a strenuous assertor of his right to worship: it was left to others to build upon the foundation which Socinus laid; and to bring the Unitarian doctrine to the goodly form, in which the present age beholds it.

5. But, Sir, my supposition is not only free from improbability; it is highly probable: Ebion, in his notions of the Redeemer, as I have already had occasion to observe, seems to have been a mere Cerinthian—Epiphanius and Irenæus say, that he held the Cerinthian doctrine of a union of Jesus with a superangelick being. The Cerinthian doctrine was,—that this union commenced at our Lord's baptism; was interrupted during the crucifixion and at the time of our Lord's interment, but restored again after his resurrection; and being

restored, it rendered the man Jesus an object of divine honours. As Epiphanius says in general of Ebion, that he held the Cerinthian doctrine concerning Christ, without specifying parts that he received, and parts that he rejected; the probability is, that he received the whole; and of consequence, that he worshipped Christ as a deified man, notwithstanding that he denied his original divinity. This supposition of mine hath, you see, a probability of its own; which is quite distinct from that which accrues to it, from its use in reconciling Eusebius with the historian that he quotes; and is founded on the acknowledged agreement of Ebion with Cerinthus.

6. For my other supposition, that Theodotus might be the first person who taught the Unitarian doctrine at Rome, you think it highly improbable, "because Tertullian says, that in his time, the Unitarians were the greater part of believers:"* at Rome therefore, "where there was a conflux of all Religions and of all sects," the probability is little, that there should be no Unitarians. Sir, I will grant—I am liberal, I am sure, in my concessions—I will grant, that Rome swarmed with Unitarians in the time of Tertullian: not for the reason which you assign; that Tertullian says, the Unitarians were the majority of believers; for this Tertullian hath not said; with whatever confidence you may ascribe to him, the dreams of Znicker and his credulous disciples; I must take the liberty to say, Sir, that a man ought to be accomplished in ancient learning, who thinks he may

* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 103.—See also p. 121; and Second Letters, p. 71.

escape, with impunity, and without detection, in the attempt, to brow-beat the world with a peremptory and reiterated allegation, of testimonies that exist not: but, Sir, although I deny that Tertullian says, that the Unitarians were in his time the majority of believers; yet I will grant, that they were numerous at Rome in the time of Tertullian; I profess I know not how numerous, or how few they were; but to show the strength of my cause, since you are pleased to have it so, let them be numerous; how will their numbers affect my supposition, that Theodotus was the first person who, at Rome, taught the Unitarian doctrine? Might not this be, although the Unitarians swarmed at Rome in the time of Tertullian? Believe me, Sir, it well might be; for the times of Tertullian, were the very times of Theodotus: about the year of our Lord 185, Tertullian embraced Christianity—about the year of our Lord 190, came Theodotus the apostate, the tanner of Byzantium, preaching at Rome the doctrine of Antichrist.

7. My learned ally has a third conjecture, for the reconciling of Eusebius and his author. It is by no means necessary to our argument, that either of my suppositions, or that his, or that any particular conjecture which may be made upon the subject, should be brought to a certainty; you tax Eusebius with want of candour and consistency—the charge rests upon an assumption, that what Eusebius relates of the antiquity of the Ebionites, and what his author affirms of the first assertion of our Lord's mere humanity, by Theodotus, cannot be interpreted but in contradictory senses: if we have shown, by a variety of probable conjectures, that the two assertions admit consistent interpretations, that each may be true in the sense in which each writer understood him-

self, without contradiction of the other, the whole evidence of your accusation is demolished, and the charge, of temerity and presumption, lies heavy on yourself, for an attack which you cannot support with proof, upon the character of a grave and respectable historian.

I am, &c.

LETTER FIFTEENTH.

In Reply to Dr Priestley's seventh.—The metaphysical difficulties stated by Dr Priestley, neither new nor unanswerable.—Difficulties short of a contradiction, no objection to a revealed doctrine.—Difficulties in the Arian and Socinian doctrine.—The Father not the sole object of worship.—Our Lord, in what sense an image of the invisible God, and the first-born of every creature.—Not the design of the evangelists, to deliver a system of fundamental principles.—The doctrine of the Trinity, rests on the general tenor of the sacred writings.—The inference, that Christ is not God, because the apostles often speak of him as man, invalid.—The inference, from the manner in which he sometimes speaks of himself, invalid.—The Athanasians of the last age, no Tritheists.

DEAR SIR,

AFTER the declaration which I have made, that I will not enter into a regular controversy with you, upon the subject of the Trinity; you will not wonder, if you receive only a general reply to some parts of your seventh letter. A particular answer to the several objections which it contains, would lead me into metaphysical disquisitions, which I wish to decline, because, in that subject I foresee, that we should want common principles, and a common language. The questions, which you

propose in the second and the fourth sections of this letter, are not new, and have been answered: but if they were unanswerable, what would be the inference? The inference would only be, that the doctrine of the Trinity hath its difficulties; and is it possible, that any doctrine concerning the nature of the Deity, should be without its difficulties? When the infinite distance is considered between man and his Maker, it seems reasonable to presume, that there must be mysteries, far above the reach of the human understanding, both in the nature of God, and in the plan of his government; that the fullest discovery that could be made, of God and of his ways, to the human intellect, must be imperfect; because, however perfect in itself, it could be but imperfectly apprehended. No difficulties, therefore, short of a contradiction, can be allowed to constitute an objection, to a doctrine claiming divine original; on the contrary, it should rather seem, that to involve difficulties, must be one characteristick of a divine revelation; and its greatest difficulties, may reasonably be expected to lie in those parts, which immediately respect the nature of God, and the manner of his existence: if you would suppose the contrary, if you would insist, that a divine revelation, being intended for the general information of mankind, must be perspicuous and free from difficulty; I would ask, is Christianity clear of difficulties in any of the Unitarian schemes? hath the Arian hypothesis no difficulty, when it ascribes both the first formation, and the perpetual government of the universe, not to the Deity, but to an inferior being? can any power or wisdom, less than the Supreme, be a sufficient ground for the trust we are required to place in Providence? Make the wisdom and the power of our ruler what you please;

still, upon the Arian principle, it is the wisdom and the power of a creature: where then will be the certainty, that the evil which we find in the world, hath not crept in through some imperfection in the original contrivance, or in the present management; since every intellect, below the first, may be liable to error, and any power, short of the supreme, may be inadequate to purposes of a certain magnitude? But if evil may have thus crept in, what assurance can we have, that it will ever be extirpated? In the Socinian scheme, is it no difficulty, that the capacity of a mere man should contain that wisdom, by which God made the universe? Whatever is meant by *the Word* in St John's gospel, it is the same Word of which the evangelist says, that all things were made by it, and that it was itself made flesh: if this Word be the Divine attribute, Wisdom; then that attribute, in the degree which was equal to the formation of the universe, in this view of the Scripture doctrine, was conveyed entire into the mind of a mere man, the son of a Jewish carpenter—a much greater difficulty, in my apprehension, than any that is to be found in the Catholick faith.*

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* In reply to this, Dr Priestley says to me, in the thirteenth of his Second Letters, sec. 5. "Pray, Sir, what Socinian ever maintained, that the Divine attribute, Wisdom, in the degree which was equal to the formation of the universe, was conveyed entire into the mind of Jesus Christ?" I say, that St John maintains it, if St John was, what Dr Priestley believes him to have been, a Socinian.—It is maintained in the beginning of St John's gospel, if the evangelist's words be expounded in the true sense by the Unitarians—the Word, which was with God from the beginning, according to St John, was made flesh: if the Word, which was made flesh, was not the same Word which was in the beginning with God, by which all things were made, there is no meaning in the evangelist's words, literal or figurative. The Word's being made flesh, according to the Socinians, was only a communication of the Word to the mind of Christ: what was communicated to the mind of Christ? that Word which was from the

2. In the third section of your seventh letter, you build an argument for the sole deity of the Father, upon an assumption that he is the sole object of worship. To this argument I have replied.* I deny the assumption—I cite the example of St Stephen, whose last act of worship was addressed to Christ: you allege, on the other side, the example of our Saviour, who himself prayed to the Father, the authority of Origen; and, I know not what, early and universal practice: I reply, that our Saviour, as a man, owed worship to the Father: I maintain, that neither the authority of Origen, nor any universal practice of a later age, can outweigh the example of St Stephen, were it single; much less, supported as it is by other examples of equal weight: the worship addressed to Christ, by St Stephen and the apostles, either proves the divinity of Christ, or it justifies the worship of the saints and martyrs in the Roman church; and they who live in countries, where the papal superstition is established, may without scruple, invocate St Michael, St Raphael, St Abel, St Abraham, St Stephen, St Sebastian; and all the saints, angelick and human, Jewish and Christian, of the Roman calendar.

3. The text of St Paul (Col. i. 15.) was produced by me,† not as the most explicit assertion that may be

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beginning, which made the world—Dr Priestley says, this is more than the Unitarians believe: "what we believe is———that a *portion* only, of the same wisdom which formed the universe, was communicated to Christ." It may be so. Far be it from me to tax Dr Priestley, or his brethren, with a larger faith than they profess; but if they believe no more than Dr Priestley in this passage acknowledges, they believe much less than St John asserts, in the most reduced sense of his expressions.

* Lette XI. † See Charge p. 15.

found in Scripture, of our Lord's divinity: but as an explicit assertion, that he is at least something much more than man, and that the universe was made by him. If the dignity of his nature were mentioned, only in this single passage, or were no where described by higher titles than those which the apostle uses here; "the *image* of the invisible God, and the *first-born* of every creature," divinity might seem more than is implied in them: but when we recollect the stronger expressions, which occur in other places; in particular, St Paul's assertion, that he was originally in the form of God, of which he emptied himself to take the form of a servant, *i. e.* of a man; and when to all other proofs of the high dignity of his nature, we add St John's explicit doctrine of his eternity and Godhead; it must be very evident, that it could not be the intention of St Paul, in this passage, to sink the Son of God into the rank of a creature, or to separate him from the Divine nature. The force of St Paul's description, in both its branches, lies rather in the adjectives, *invisible* and *first-born*, than in the substantives, *image* and *creature:* the first branch of the description, that "he is the image of the invisible God," points to a circumstance, upon which the early fathers dwell, as one of the principal personal distinctions; that it is in the person only of the Son, that the glory of the Godhead can be rendered visible—*For God*, in the person of the Father, *no man hath seen at any time.** The Son, is therefore an image of the Invisible Deity; not as a likeness formed in a distinct substance, but as he, who, in every instance of an im-

* John i. 18; and vi. 46.

mediate intercourse between God and man, hath been the appearing person.* The second branch of the description, holds out a distinction between birth and creation, which implies, that the Son's existence is dependent on the Father's, in some other manner than that, in which any creature's existence is dependent on its Maker's. You must know, that the words in the original text, πρωτοτοκος πασης κτισεως, are equivalent to these: ὁ τεχθεις προ πασης κτισεως, *he who was born or begotten before any creation,* or *before any thing was made.* "It is observable, says Dr Clarke, that St Paul does not here call our Saviour πρωτοκτιστον πασης κτισεως, *the first created of all creatures,* but πρωτοτοκον πασης κτισεως, *the first born of every creature;* the first begotten before all creatures."

4. I allow, that "there is nothing that can be called an *account* of the divine nature of Christ, in the gospels of St Matthew, St Mark, or St Luke:"† But, every one of the gospels abounds with passages, in which it is so evidently implied, that no room is left to doubt, that the four evangelists, had but one opinion upon the subject: I cannot admit your position, that "each of the gospels, was intended to be a sufficient instruction in the fundamental principles of the doctrine of Christianity;"‡ nothing seems to have been less the intention of any of the evangelists, than to compose a system of fundamental principles—instruction in fundamentals, in that age, was orally delivered; the general design of

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* ——— *image of the invisible God.* "A lively description of the person of Christ; whereby we understand, that in him only God showeth himself to be seen." Marginal note, in Barker's quarto Bible, 1599.

† Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 91. ‡ Ibid.

the evangelists, seems to have been nothing more than to deliver in writing, a simple, unembellished narrative of our Lord's principal miracles; to record the occurrences and actions of his life, which went immediately to the completion of the ancient prophecies, or to the execution of the scheme of man's redemption; and to register the most interesting maxims of religion and morality, which were contained in his discourses. The principles of the Christian religion, are to be collected, neither from a single gospel, nor from all the four gospels; nor from the four gospels, with the acts and the epistles; but from the whole code of revelation, consisting of the canonical books of the Old and New Testament: and for any article of faith, the authority of a single writer, where it is express and unequivocal, is sufficient. Had St Paul related what he saw in the third heaven, I hope, Sir, you would have given him implicit credit, although the truth of the narrative, must have rested on his single testimony.

5. I cannot however grant, that the general tenor of Scripture, supposes not such a Trinity as I contend for.* I contend, that your doctrine is what stands upon particular texts; while the Catholick faith, is supported by the general tenor of the sacred writings, and by the consent of those writings, in many parts, with an universal tradition of unexplored antiquity.

6. You ask me, "why the doctrine of the Trinity, if it be a truth, was not taught as explicitly in the New Testament, as the doctrine of the Divine unity, both in Old and New?"† and you say, "that many passages in

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* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 87. † Ibid. p. 92.

Scripture, inculcate the doctrine of the Divine unity, in the clearest and strongest manner:"* be pleased, Sir, to produce one of the many: I know of no doctrine of the Divine unity, taught either in the Old Testament or in the New, but the doctrine, that Jehovah, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the Creator of heaven and earth; is the one true God, in opposition to the variety of imaginary gods worshipped by the heathen:† concerning the metaphysical unity of the Divine nature, the Scriptures are silent; except that, by discovering a Trinity of persons, they teach clearly what the unity is not; namely, that it is not personal: if you imagine, that the absolute unity of the Divine substance, is more easy to be explained than the Trinity; let me entreat you, Sir, to read the Parmenides: it is indeed in Plato's school, if any where, that a man's eyes are likely to be opened to his own ignorance. Read the Parmenides—you will then perhaps perceive, that that unity, which must be the foundation of all being, is itself, of all things, the most mysterious and incomprehensible. I must know more of it than I do, before I can pretend to perceive, what is so clear to you, that you think that I cannot deny it, "that the doctrine of the Trinity, looks like an infringement of the unity."‡

7. The argument contained in the seventh section of your seventh letter, splits, I think, into three, resting on the three different assumptions. The apostles, both in the book of Acts, and in their epistles, usually call

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* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 93.

† Το μεν γαρ θεον ομολογειν ενα, προς αντιδιασολην της ελληνων πολυθεου πλανης, πρωτοι παρειληφασιν Ιουδαιων παιδες. Euseb. Ecc. Theol. lib. i. c. 2.

‡ Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 92.

Christ a man; therefore they knew not that he was God; for the discovery would have changed their language.*

8. They speak of him as a man, in reasoning and argumentation. Therefore he was a man.†

9, They behaved to him as a man, in their ordinary intercourse with him; therefore they had no apprehension that he was God.‡

10. To the two first arguments, it is an answer, that according to the faith which I defend, Christ is truly a man as well as God: it is no wonder therefore, that he should be mentioned as a man, when nothing in the narrative, or in the argument, requires that his divinity should be particularly brought to view.

11. To the first argument in particular, it is a further answer; that it was the style of all the sacred writers, and it is the style of all writers, to name things rather after their appearances, than their internal forms: the tempter you know, in the Mosaick history of the fall, is called the serpent; and is not once mentioned by any other name: the three angels, who appeared to Abraham in the form of men, are called men, throughout the story.

12. To the second argument in particular, it is a further answer; that, as the scheme of man's redemption, required the incarnation of the Son of God; the apostles, would often find it necessary in reasoning upon that scheme, and in argumentation in defence of it, to insist on his humanity.

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* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 93. † Ibid. 94.
‡ Ibid. 93, and 94.

13. The third branch of the argument, cannot be allowed to have any force at all, even though the assumption upon which it rests should be admitted, if we have the authority of the apostles, in their writings, for the deity of Christ; the most that could be inferred, were the assumption true, would be something strange in their conduct; and even this might be a hasty inference—the singularity of their conduct might disappear, if the accounts which they have left of our Lord's life on earth, and of their attendance upon him, were more circumstantial: but the truth is, that the foundations of this argument are unsound: it may be gathered from the evangelical history, imperfect as it is, that the behaviour of the apostles to our Lord during his life, possessed as they were with an imperfect, wavering belief in him as the Messiah, and with indistinct notions of the Messiah's divinity, was the natural behaviour of men under these impressions: they treat him, upon all occasions, with a very distant reserve: sometimes they invoke him as a deity; as St Peter, when he was sinking in the sea, and all the disciples, in the storm. If the angels, Michael or Gabriel, should come and live among us, in the manner which you suppose,* I think we should soon lose our habitual recollection of their angelick nature; it would be only occasionally awaked by extraordinary incidents: This at least would be the case, if they mixed with us upon an even footing, without assuming any badges of distinction, wearing a common garb, partaking of our lodging and of our board, suffering in the same degree with ourselves from hunger

* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 94.

and fatigue, and seeking the same refreshments. The wonder would be, if angels, in this disguise, met with any other respect, than that which dignity of character commands, with something of occasional homage, when their miraculous help was needed. This was the respect which our Lord met with from his followers. You say, "he could not divest himself of his superior and proper nature :"* but St Paul says quite the contrary,—that he emptied himself, and assumed a form, which set out of sight the transcendent dignity of his nature, and deprived him of the homage due to it. The scheme of man's redemption required this humiliation, which made a part of the sufferings by which our guilt was to be atoned.

14. In the eighth section of this seventh letter, you argue against our Lord's divinity, from "the manner in which he speaks of the power by which he worked miracles, as not his own, but the Father's;"† and from the manner in which he speaks of himself, saying, *My Father is greater than I.* If from such expressions, you would be content to infer, that the Almighty Father is indeed the fountain and the centre of divinity; and that the equality of Godhead is to be understood, with some mysterious subordination of the Son, to the Father; you would have the concurrence of the ancient fathers, and of many advocates of the true faith, in all ages. If you would infer any other inferiority, than what is necessarily implied in the relation of a Son, some of the very passages to which you allude, will serve to your confutation: such are those sayings of our Lord, recorded in

* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 24. † Ibid. p. 95.

St John's gospel, that "the Son can do nothing of himself*—the word which you hear, is not mine, but the Father's which sent me†——the Father which dwelleth in me, he doeth the works:"‡ refer the expressions to the context, and it will appear, that, with something of a subordination on the part of the Son, they assert the most perfect identity of nature, the most entire unity of will, and consent of intellect, and an incessant cooperation in the exertion of common powers to a common purpose. You are, Sir, very positive in the assertion, that Dr Waterland in particular, and all the strict Athanasians of the last age, maintained, "that the Trinity consists of three persons, all truly independent of each other:"‖ upon this opinion, which you ascribe to the strict Athanasians, you remark in your History,§ that to make three proper distinct persons, independent of each other, is to make three distinct gods. I concur with you in this remark, in which you have been anticipated by the Roman Dionysius; whose judgment you know, upon certain persons of his own time, who, in their zeal against Sabellius, ran into this error, "is quoted with approbation by Athanasius himself;"¶ but, Sir, I deny, of Dr Waterland in particular, and of the strict Athanasians of the last age in general, that they fall justly under this censure.

15. Bishop Bull, in his defence of the Nicene faith, spends a whole chapter, and a very long chapter it is, upon the subject of the Son's subordination; which he

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* John v. 19. † Ibid. xiv. 24. ‡ Ibid. xiv. 10.
‖ Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 80. § Vol. i. p. 147.
¶ See Dr Priestley's Hist. vol. i. p. 65; and the first of these Letters.

maintains to be as much a branch of the true faith, as the doctrine of the Son's eternity or consubstantiality.

16. The same thing is asserted by Bishop Pearson, in his exposition of the apostles creed: he observes, that "in the very name of Father, there is something of eminence, which is not in that of Son; and something of priority we must ascribe unto the first, in respect of the second person."* "——We must not therefore so far endeavour to involve ourselves in the darkness of this mystery, as to deny that glory which is clearly due unto the Father—he is God, not of any other, but of himself;——there is no other person who is God, but is God of him:—it is no diminution of the Son to say, he is from another—but it were a diminution of the Father to speak so of him; and there must be some preeminence, where there is a place for derogation—the first person is a Father indeed, by reason of his Son, but he is not God by reason of him; whereas, the Son is not only Son in regard of the Father, but also God, by reason of the same."† Upon this preeminence of the Father, the learned Bishop founds the congruity of the Divine mission;‡ and he maintains, that "the dignity of the Father appears, from the order of persons in the blessed Trinity, of which he is undoubtedly the first. Although in some passages of the apostolical discourses, the Son may be first named——and in others the Holy Ghost precede the Son——yet, where the three persons are barely enumerated, and delivered unto us as the rule of faith, there that order is observed, which is proper to them——this order hath been perpetuated in all

* Pearson on the creed, p. 34. † Ibid. ‡ Ibid. p. 37.

confessions of faith, and is for ever to be inviolably observed:"* and this order being so generally acknowledged by the Fathers, the bishop remarks in a note, that, "when we read in the Athanasian creed, that *in this Trinity none is afore or after other*, we must understand the negation of the priority of perfection or time."†

17. To the same purpose, the learned Mr William Stephens, author of some able discourses on the Trinity, in his sermon *On the Eternal Generation of the Son of God*, preached before the university of Oxford, August 5th 1722, affirms; that "on the communication of the Godhead from the Father to the son—is founded and established, all that subordination which we assert among the persons of the Trinity"—he adds, that "unless some subordination be maintained, we run into Tritheism." For he agrees with you and me, that "three *co-ordinate* persons, would be manifestly three gods."

18. The same sentiments are acknowledged by Dr Waterland, in his commentary on the Athanasian creed: "When it is said, *none is afore or after other*, we are not to understand it of order; for the Father is first, the Son second, the Holy Ghost third in order. Neither are we to understand it of office; for the Father is supreme in office, while the Son and Holy Ghost, condescend to inferior offices: but we are to understand it, as the creed itself explains it, of duration and dignity."‡

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* Pearson on the creed, p. 37. † Ibid.

‡ Waterland on the Athanasian creed, p. 144.

19. From these passages it appears, that you misrepresent the strict Athanasians of the last age, when you charge them with asserting such a separation and independence of the three persons, as would amount to Tritheism: and you misrepresent me, when you insinuate, that I would set the three persons at a greater distance, than the Athanasians of the last age allowed: I maintain, that the Three Persons are one Being; One by mutual relation, indissoluble connexion, and gradual subordination: so strictly One, that any individual thing, in the whole world of matter and of spirit, presents but a faint shadow of their unity. I maintain, that each person by himself is God; because each possesses fully every attribute of the Divine nature; but I maintain, that these persons are all included in the very idea of a God; and that for that reason, as well as for the identity of the attributes in each, it were impious and absurd to say, there are three Gods—for, to say there are three Gods, were to say there are three Fathers, three Sons, and three Holy Ghosts: I maintain the equality of the three persons, in all the attributes of the Divine nature—I maintain their equality in rank and authority, with respect to all created things, whatever relations or differences may subsist between themselves: Differences there must be, lest we confound the persons, which was the error of Sabellius: but the differences can only consist in the personal properties, lest we divide the substance, and make a plurality of independent gods. It will not put me out of conceit with the arguments, which I have brought to support these sacred truths, or with the illustrations which I have attempted, that you pronounce them equal in absurdity to

any thing in the Jewish cabala,* (of which I suspect you hardly know enough to judge with certainty of this pretended resemblance,) or that you imagine, when you read me, that you are reading Peter Lombard, Thomas Aquinas, or Duns Scotus:† perhaps, Sir, though a Protestant divine, I may sometimes condescend to look into the *Summa*,‡ and may be less mortified, than you conceive, with this comparison. It was well meant however, and is one of those general depreciatory insinuations, which are apt to catch the vulgar, and may serve the purpose of a reply, upon any occasion, when a real reply is not to be framed.

I am, &c.

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* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 80. † Ibid. p. 99.

‡ ——— no Protestant, I imagine, will ever think it worth his while to read many sections in that work—the *Summa*. Hist. of Corrup. vol. i. p. 119.

LETTER SIXTEENTH.

The Unitarian doctrine, not well calculated for the conversion of Jews, Mahometans, or Infidels of any description.

DEAR SIR,

You express in your history, and in your letters to me, a very charitable anxiety about Jews, Mahometans, and Infidels: it is one of your great objections to the doctrine of the Trinity, that it is, as you conceive, an obstruction to their conversion; which you think might be speedily effected, by reducing Christianity to the Unitarian creed. My notion is, that it is our duty to adhere to the letter of the gospel; and to leave it to God to open the eyes of Jews, Mahometans, and Infidels, in his own time, and in his own way. Your device of bringing them to believe Christianity, by giving the name of Christianity to what they already believe, in principle, exactly resembles the stratagem of a certain missionary of the Jesuits, of whom I have somewhere read; who, in his zeal for the conversion of an Indian chief, on whom the sublimity of the doctrine of the gospel, and the purity of its moral precepts, made little impression, told him,—that Christ had been a valiant and successful warrior, who, in the space of three years, scalped men, women, and children, without number: the savage was well disposed to become

a disciple of such a master—he was baptized, with his whole tribe, and the Jesuit gloried in his numerous converts.

2. Pardon me, Sir, if I express a doubt whether your stratagem promise equal success: for the Jews, whenever they begin to open their eyes to the evidences of our Saviour's mission, they will still be apt to consider the New Testament, in connexion with the Old: they will look for an agreement, in principle at least, between the gospel and the law: when they accept the Christian doctrine, it will be as a later and a fuller discovery: they will reject it, if they conceive it to be contradictory to the patriarchal and the Mosaick revelations. Successive discoveries of divine truth may differ, they will say, in fullness and perspicuity; but in principle they must harmonize, as parts of one system: they will retain some veneration for their traditional doctrines; and in their most ancient Targums, as well as in allusions in their sacred books, they will find the notion of one Godhead in a Trinity of persons; and they will perceive, that it was in contradiction to the Christians, that their later rabbin abandoned the notions of their forefathers. The Unitarian scheme of Christianity, is the last therefore, to which the Jews are likely to be converted, as it is the most at enmity with their ancient faith.

3. With the Mahometans indeed, your prospects may seem more promising; as the whole difference between you and them, seems very inconsiderable. The true Mussulman, believes as much, or rather more of Christ, than the Unitarian requires to be believed; and though the Unitarians have not yet recognized the divine mission of Mahomet, there is good ground to think, they

will not long stand out:* in Unitarian writings of the last century, it is allowed of Mahomet, that he had no other design than to restore the belief of the unity of God—of his religion, that it was not meant for a new religion, but for a restitution of the true intent of the Christian—of the grand prevalence of the Mahometan religion, that it hath been owing, not to force and the sword, but to that one truth contained in the Alcoran, the unity of God. With these friendly dispositions towards each other, it should seem, that the Mahometan and the Unitarian might easily be brought to agree—but the experiment hath been very seriously tried, without any event answerable to the expectation: you may not know it, Sir, but so it was,—that in the reign of Charles the Second, a negociation was regularly opened, on the part of our English Unitarians, with his excellency Ameth Ben Ameth, ambassador of the emperor of Morocco at the British court, in order to form an alliance with the Mahometan prince, for the more effectual propagation of the Unitarian principles: The two Unitarian divines, who undertook this singular treaty, address the ambassador and the Mussulmen of his suite, as "votaries and fellow-worshippers of the sole supreme Deity." They return thanks to God, that he hath pre-

* Dr Priestley, in his Second Letters, p. 163, wittily remarks, "that I might almost as well assert, that all the Unitarians in England are already so far Mahometans, that, to my certain knowledge, they are actually circumcised." Upon this occasion, I cannot but remind him of what history records, of an elder brother of our modern Unitarians. In the latter end of the sixteenth century, Adam Neuser, pastor of the church of Heidelberg, the first, or among the first propagators of the Socinian heresy in the Palatinate, began in Socinianism, and finished his career with turning Mahometan, and submitting to circumcision, at Constantinople.

An English is also the example

served the emperor of Morocco, and his subjects, in the excellent knowledge of one only sovereign God, who hath no distinction nor plurality of persons; and in many other wholesome doctrines: they say, that they, with their pens, defend the faith of one supreme God, and that God raised up Mahomet to do the same with the sword, as a scourge on idolizing Christians—they therefore style themselves, the fellow-champions with the Mahometans, for these truths—they offer their assistance, to purge the Alcoran of certain corruptions and interpolations; which, after the death of Mahomet, had crept into his papers, of which the Alcoran was composed; for, of Mahomet they think too highly, to suppose that he could be guilty of the many repugnancies, which are to be found in the writings that go under his name. This work they declare themselves willing to undertake, for the vindication of Mahomet's glory: they intimate, that the corrections which they would propose, would render the Alcoran more consistent, not with itself only, but with the gospel of Christ: of which, they say, Mahomet pretended to be but a preacher—they tell the ambassador, that the Unitarian Christians are a great and considerable people: to give weight to the assertion, they enumerate the hæresiarchs of all ages who have opposed the Trinity, from Paulus Samosatensis, down to Faustus Socinus, and the leaders of the Polonian fraternity: they celebrate the modern tribes of Arianizing Christians, as asserters of the proper unity of God; and they close the honourable list, with the Mahometans themselves. "All these (they say) maintain the faith of one—God: and why should we forget to add you Mahometans, who also consent with us in the belief of one only supreme Deity?" Such is

the substance of a letter, which they presented to the ambassador, with some Latin manuscripts, respecting the differences between Christianity and the Mahometan religion, and containing an ample detail of the Unitarian tenets; they apply to the Mussulman as to a person of "known discernment in spiritual and sublime matters;" and they intreat him, to communicate the import of their manuscripts, to the consideration of the fittest persons of his countrymen. This singular epistle may be seen entire, in Dr Leslie's *Socinian Controversy Discussed*—an hundred years are almost elapsed, since these overtures were made to the Moor; and as no effect hath yet followed, it should seem, that the conversion of the Mahometans to the Unitarian Christianity, is as unlikely as that of the Jews.

4. For the unbelievers, Sir, Mr Gibbon, as you seem yourself to intimate, hath given you but slender hopes:* unbelievers indeed are of two descriptions—the sober Deists; who, rejecting revelation, acknowledge however the obligations of morality; believe a Providence; and expect a future retribution: and the Atheists; who have neither hope nor fear beyond the present life; deny the Providence of God; and doubt at least of his existence.

5. Infidels of the first description, will hardly become your disciples; because you have nothing to teach them, but what they think they know: "We think, they will say, no less reverently than you of the moral attributes of God: upon our notions of his attributes, we build an

* "——— Mr Gibbon has absolutely declined to discuss with me, as I proposed to him, the historical evidences of Christianity." Preface to Reply to Monthly Review, for June, p. 8.

expectation of a future existence; and we look for a lot of happiness or misery, in our future life, according to our deserts in this. The whole difference between you and us is this: that we believe the same things upon different evidence; you, upon the testimony of a man, who, you say, was raised up to preach these truths; we, upon the evidence of reason; which we think a higher evidence than any human testimony: we think, that a revelation is pretended with a very ill grace, when nothing hath been actually revealed. Revelation is discovery: the doctrines of a God, a Providence, and a future state, were known to the Jews before Christ; to the patriarchs before Moses; they have been known to thinking men in all ages; and there can be no place for discovery, where there hath been no concealment." If you would say, that the end of revelation is, to extend to all mankind that useful knowledge, which must otherwise have been enjoyed but by a few; to convey information by testimony, to those who are incapable of informing themselves by abstract reasoning; that the gospel is therefore a revelation, because, to the bulk of mankind it is a discovery, and a discovery of sufficient importance to claim a divine original; they will reply, that whatever weight this argument might carry, if it were urged by those, who take the Scriptures in their literal meaning, and conceive that the revelation is conveyed in a plain undisguised language; it is a feeble weapon in the hand of an Unitarian. "If your method of interpretation be the true one, the first preachers of Christianity, they will say, differed not from other moralists, otherwise than by the wonderful obscurity of their language, and the air of mystery, which they have contrived to throw over the simplest truths; their enig-

matick language, is as little adapted to popular apprehension, as the abstruse reasonings of philosophers: the success of their doctrine hath been such, as might have been well foreseen: they were studious of obscurity—they have attained their end: they have been misunderstood by a great majority of their followers, for almost two thousand years—they professed to teach the pure worship of the true God—the language in which they conveyed their doctrine, hath been the means of introducing the grossest idolatry. We will not trust ourselves to such dangerous guides, who, as you expound their writings, never spake upon the most interesting subjects, without figure and equivocation."

6. For the Atheistick infidels, who are in the first place to be convinced of the existence of a Deity; your doctrine, that there is no mind in man, but what results from the organization of the brain, will never lead them to conclude, that mind is older than body, in the universe. "You would persuade me, the Atheist will say, that there is an higher intellect than mine, the cause of all things: but if intellect in me, be the result of motion, why not in any other intelligent? You only confirm my incredulity, and multiply my doubts—you make me doubt of my own intellect, while you would account for its production; and you confirm the suspicion, which I have long entertained, that the material world is older than its supposed maker: that mind, if indeed such a thing exist, hath, like all other things, started spontaneously from a corporeal chaos; and, instead of being the first cause and the governing principle, is the youngest of all nature's productions." Your principle, that death is an utter extinction of the man, your Atheistical pupil will easily admit; but it is little

likely to awaken him to the hope of a future existence: the hope which you hold out of a resurrection, he will tell you, is no hope at all, even admitting that the evidence of the thing could, upon your principles, be indisputable. "The atoms which compose *me*, your Atheist will say, may indeed have composed a man before, and may again: but *me* they will never more compose, when once the present *me* is dissipated—I have no recollection of a former, and no concern about a future self.

> Et nunc nihil ad nos de nobis attinet, ante
> Qui fuimus; nec jam de illis nos afficit angor,
> Quos de materiâ nostrâ nova proferet ætas.
> . . . . . .
> . . . . . .
> Inter enim jecta est vitäi pausa, vageque
> Deerârunt passim motus ab sensibus omnes."

7. It should seem, Sir, that your doctrines are ill calculated for the conversion of Jews or Infidels: upon the Mahometans, their efficacy hath been tried without success. The Unitarians, therefore, are not likely to be the instruments of these conversions.

I am, &c.

N. B. The story of the negociation on the part of the English Unitarians, in the reign of Charles the Second, with the ambassador of the emperor of Morocco; Dr Priestley, in the fifteenth of his Second Letters, is pleased to treat with great contempt, as an invention, that is to say, a lie or forgery, of Dr Leslie's: fortunately, the evidence of this extraordinary fact, is yet extant in the Archiepiscopal Library at Lambeth. Among the *Codices Manuscripti Tenisoniani*, is a thin folio, marked with the number 673, and entered in the catalogue,

under the article *Socinians*, by the title of *Systema Theologiæ Socinianæ*. It contains four tracts: the first, is the very letter to Ameth Ben Ameth, published by Dr Leslie, written in a very fair hand; on the preceding leaf, are these remarks. "These are the original papers, which a cabal of Socinians in London, offered to present to the Embassadour of the King of Fez and Morocco, when he was taking leave of England, August 1682. The said Embassadour, refused to receive them, after having understood that they concerned religion. The agent of the Socinians was Monsieur Verze: Sir Charles Cottrell, Kn. Mr of the Cerem. then præsent, desired he might have them; which was graunted: and he brought them and gave them to me, Thomas Tenison, then Vicar of St Martin's in the Fields, Middl."

The second tract is in Latin, entitled, *Epistola Ameth Benundula Mahometani ad Auriacum Principem Comitum Mauritium, et ad Emmanuelem Portugalliæ Principem.*

The third tract is again in Latin, entitled, *Animadversiones in præcedentem Epistolam.* These two tracts are the Latin letter, and the remarks of the Unitarian divines upon it, which are mentioned in the English letter to Ameth Ben Ameth, and of which Dr Leslie, in his preface, says he had seen a printed copy.

The fourth tract, I take to be the preface to the printed edition, or intended edition: this also is in Latin, and is inscribed *Theognis Irenæus Christiano Lectori salutem.*

I do most solemnly aver, that I have this day, Jan. 15, 1789, compared the letter to Ameth Ben Ameth, as published by Dr Leslie, in his *Socinian Controversy*

Discussed, with the manuscript in the Archbishop's Library, and find that the printed copy, with the exception of some trivial typographical errors, which in no way affect the sense, and are such as any reader will discover and correct for himself, is exactly conformable to the manuscript, without the omission or addition of a single word: I do moreover aver, that the remarks in the leaf, at the beginning of the manuscript, giving an account of its contents, and of the manner in which these papers came into the possession of Dr Tenison, were this same day copied verbatim from the manuscript by myself, upon the spot.

If Dr Priestley should mistrust my veracity in these assertions, (which I think he will not,) I promise him that I will at any time use my endeavours to procure him a sight of the manuscript, that he may satisfy himself.

LETTER SEVENTEENTH.

The archdeacon takes leave of the controversy.

DEAR SIR,

IT might be but consistent with the *pride*, which you impute to me as a churchman, and with the *contemptuous airs*, which I am apt to give myself with respect to dissenters ;* were I to close our present correspondence, without any notice of your animadversions upon that part of my Charge, which regards the studies of the younger clergy, and what you are pleased to call my terms of communion. It might be a sufficient, and not an unbecoming reply, to remind you, that I spoke *ex cathedra*, and hold myself accountable for the advice which I gave, to no human judicature, except the KING, the Metropolitan, and my Diocesan. This would indeed be the only answer, which I should condescend to give to any one for whom I retained not, under all our differences, a very considerable degree of personal esteem ; but as Dr Priestley is my adversary, in some points, I could wish to set him right, and in some I desire to explain.

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* "If your pride as a churchman, and the contemptuous airs you give yourself with respect to dissenters, &c." Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 112.

2. If I have any where expressed myself contemptuously, the contempt is not of you, but of your argument upon a particulr subject, upon which I truly think you argue very weakly; and of your information upon a point, in which I truly think you are ill informed: this hinders not, but that I may entertain the respect, which I profess, for your learning in other subjects; for your abilities, in all subjects in which you are learned; and a cordial esteem and affection for the virtues of your character, which I believe to be great and amiable. Your attack being made, upon those parts of the established faith, which I conceive to be fundamental principles of the Christian religion, I hold it my duty to show the weakness of your reasoning; to expose your insufficiency in these subjects; and to bear my testimony aloud, against your doctrine. Between duty to God and to his church, and respect for man, it were criminal to hesitate. Upon any occasion, wherein complaisance might be allowed to operate, you are the last person, whose feelings I would have wounded.

3. You seem to think, that I secretly suspect you of artifices, which are incompatible with that purity of intention, which I would seem willing to allow.* In your last pamphlet, you complain, that I have charged you with several instances of gross disingenuity.† I am sensible, that, in these letters, you will find more, and stronger instances of charges, which you will be apt to interpret as unfavourably; and this, I fear will heighten the suspicion which you express, that even

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* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 12.

† Remarks on Monthly Review p. 12, note.

the compliments I sometimes pay you, are ironically meant.*

4. Indeed, Sir, in quoting ancient authors, when you have understood the original, which in many instances is not the case, you have too often been guilty of much reserve and management: this appears, in some instances, in which you cannot pretend, that your own inadvertency, or your printer's, hath given occasion to unmerited imputations: I wish that my complaints upon this head had been groundless; but, in justice to my own cause, I could not suffer unfair quotations to pass undetected: I am unwilling to draw any conclusion from this unseemly practice, against the general probity of your character; but you must allow me to lament, that men of integrity, in the service of what they think a good end, should indulge themselves so freely as they often do, in the use of unjustifiable means. Time was, when the practice was openly avowed; and Origen himself was among its defenders—the art which he recommended, he scrupled not to employ: I have produced an instance, in which, to silence an adversary, he had recourse to the wilful and deliberate allegation of a notorious falsehood: you have gone no such length as this, I think you may believe me sincere, when I speak respectfully of your worth and integrity; notwithstanding, that I find occasion to charge you with some degree of blame, in a sort, in which the great character of Origen was more deeply infected: would God it had been otherwise—would God I could with truth have boasted, "To these low arts stooped Origen:

* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 110.

but my contemporary, my great antagonist, disdains them." How would it have heightened the pride of victory, could I have found a fair occasion to be thus the herald of my adversary's praise!

5. I am not sensible, that I have spoken contemptuously of dissenters in general; a fair and conscientious dissent, is not the object of contempt; neither is a petulant hostility against establishments respectable; the praise which I give the Church of England, that she is the first in consideration of all the Protestant churches, is no more than liberal dissenters have themselves allowed: I have heard, from very good authority, of a conversation that passed between the late Dr Chandler, and a clergyman of the Church of Scotland, in which Chandler was a warm advocate for the constitution of the Church of England, in preference to any of the reformed churches: you will remember, that I make the learning and the piety of her clergy, of which ample monuments are extant, the basis of her preeminence; to which, however, another circumstance hath in some degree contributed; namely, that she had the discretion to observe some decency and moderation, in the business of reforming. I cannot admit, that mere distance from the Church of Rome, is the true standard of purity; and when you recollect, how strongly that maxim savours of Jack's spleen against Lord Peter, I am apt to think you will regret, that such a sentiment should stain your page.*

6. It is still my opinion, that any young clergyman, who will diligently apply to the course of studies, which

* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 112.

I took the liberty to recommend, may do without Dr Whitby's *Disquisitions*, or Dr Clarke's *Scripture Doctrine*:* the last treatise, contains indeed a very full collection of the texts relating to the Trinity—the compilation from the fathers is incomplete; the learned author having carefully selected those passages, which, taken by themselves in detachment from their contexts, seem favourable to his own opinions. I will not however deny, that, to students of a certain description, the book may have its use: I myself perhaps owe something to it; which, as you recommend it to my particular attention, it seems incumbent upon me to declare: I believe, Sir, that few have thought so much upon these subjects, as you and I have done, who have not at first wavered: perhaps, nothing but the uneasiness of doubt, added to a just sense of the importance of the question, could engage any man in the toil of the inquiry; for my own part, I shall not hesitate to confess, that I set out with great scruples, but the progress of my mind, hath been the very reverse of yours. It was at first my principle, as it is still yours, that all appearance of difficulty in the doctrine of the gospel, must arise from misinterpretation; and I was fond of the expedient of getting rid of mystery, by supposing a figure in the language: the harshness of the figures, which I had sometimes occasion to suppose, and the obvious uncertainty of all figurative interpretations, soon gave me a distrust of this method of expounding; and Butler's Analogy, cured me of the folly of looking for nothing mysterious, in the true sense of a divine revelation. By this cure, I was

* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 3.

prepared to become an easy convert to the doctrine of atonement and satisfaction; which seemed to furnish incentives to piety, that no other doctrine could supply: I soon perceived, how the value of the atonement was heightened, and what a sublimity accrued to the whole doctrine of redemption, by the notion, clearly conveyed in the Scriptures literally taken, of a Redeemer descending from a previous state of glory, to become our teacher, and to make the expiation. Thus I was brought, to a full persuasion of our Lord's preexistent dignity: Having once admitted his preexistence in an exalted state, I saw the necessity of placing him at the head of the creation: "for a derived preexistent being, supposed to animate the body of Jesus, who is not also the maker of the world, is, as you well observe, a mere creature of the imagination, whose existence is not to be inferred, with the least colourable pretext from the Scripture:* since it is not to be found, either in the literal, or in the figurative meaning. Not in the literal confessedly: not in the figurative; because, if the texts which speak of Christ, as the maker of the world, admit a figurative construction; much more those which refer only to his preexistence."† I thank you, Sir, for expressing my own sentiments with so much perspicuity, and for proving them with so much evidence:—being thus convinced, that our Lord Jesus Christ is indeed the Maker of all things; I found, that I could not rest satisfied with the notion, of a Maker of the universe *not God:* I saw, that all the extravagancies of the Gnos-

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* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 84.

† Hist. of Corrup. vol. i. p. 146.

ticks, hung upon that one principle: and I could have little opinion of the truth of a principle, which seemed so big with mischief—I then set myself to consider, whether I knew enough of the divine unity, to pronounce the "Trinity an infringement of it:" upon this point, the Platonists, whose acquaintance I now began to cultivate, soon brought me to a right mind. It was in this stage of my inquiries, while I was wavering between the Arian tenets in their original extent, and the true faith; that I first opened Dr Clarke's *Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity:* I sat seriously down to the perusal of the book—I rose a firm and decided Trinitarian. And why not recommend to others, you will say, a book which had so principal a share in your own conversion? I will tell you. It is one of those books, which may either instruct or mislead, according to the previous attainments and habits of the student: I was much at home in the Greek language; I had read the ecclesiastical historians; and I had been many years in the habit of thinking for myself, upon a variety of subjects, before I opened Dr Clarke's book. There is in most men, a culpable timidity; you and I, perhaps, have overcome that general infirmity; but there is in most men a culpable timidity, which inclines them to be easily overawed by the authority of great names: and, much as we talk of the freedom and liberality of thinking and inquiry, it is this slavish principle, not, as is pretended, any freedom of original thought, which makes converts to infidelity and heresy. Fools imagine, that the greatest authorities, are always on the side of new and singular opinions; and that, by adopting them, they get themselves into better company, than they have naturally any right to keep: and thus, they are secretly worshippers

of authority, in that very act, in which they pretend to fly in the face of it—they worship private authority, while they fly in the face of universal: they deride an old and general tradition, because they have not sagacity to trace the connexion of its parts, and to perceive the force of the entire evidence: and while they thus trample on the accumulated authority of ages; with an idiot simplicity, they suffer themselves to be led, by the mere name of the writer of the day,—a Bolingbroke, a Voltaire, a Gibbon, or a Priestley; as if they thought to become wise and learned, by taking a share and an interest in the follies, or the party-views, of men of abilities and learning: and, where a secret consciousness of ignorance, is not accompanied with the vain ambition of being thought wise; still, an undue deference to private authority, in prejudice of established opinion, seems to be the side upon which, even modest men, are liable to err: insomuch, that every man may be supposed to partake of this infirmity, in subjects in which he feels himself unlearned. To those, therefore, who are qualified to use Dr Clarke's book as a digest, which, though incomplete, may assist them in forming a judgment for themselves; to those who can and will turn it to this use, it may be serviceable: but they who, from a modest sense of their own insufficiency in the learned languages, and in ecclesiastical history, may be disposed to listen to the opinion of the writer; will be more misled by his authority, than they will be informed by the compilation. In a word, it is a book of which a scholar may make his use; but I cannot recommend it to young divines, in the beginning of their studies.

7. In the conclusion of your seventh letter, you speak of a certain defence of Bishop Bull's, of the damna-

tory clause in the Athanasian creed; of which, inasmuch as I have recommended the writings of Bishop Bull, without exception, you "presume, you tell me, that I approve:" and, to correct these expressions, which state as a presumption only, or an inference, what might be directly proved upon me by my own words, you add in a parenthesis, that I have mentioned this, among the most valuable works of that learned prelate.* Of whatever importance, Sir, I may conceive it to be, that the faith which was first delivered to the saints, should be preserved whole and undefiled; whatever I may think of the folly and the crime, of setting up private judgment for the rule of publick opinion, in opposition to a tradition traced to the first ages; and by consequence, of the same authority with that, on which the credit of the canon rests; I am no lover of damnatory clauses: I am an enemy to any application of damnatory clauses to particular persons: I am hopeful, that there is more folly in the world than malignity; more ignorance than positive infidelity; more error than heretical perverseness. How is it then, that I recommend a defence of the damnatory clause, among the most valuable of a learned Bishop's works? Sir, did you write this in your sleep? Or is it in a dream only that I seem to read it; Bishop Bull's defence of the damnatory clause! From you, Sir, I have now my first information, that Bishop Bull ever wrote upon the subject—the writings of Bishop Bull, which I have particularly recommended, are these three Latin treatises: *Defensio fidei Nicenæ: Judicium Ecclesiæ Catholicæ de necessitate credendi Je-*

* Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 109.

sum Christum esse verum Deum: Primitiva et Apostolica traditio de Jesu Christi divinitate. To which I might have added a fourth, of less importance, *Animadversiones in brevem tractatum Gul. Clerke*, &c. These are all his writings upon the Trinitarian controversy, which are contained in the edition of his Latin works, by Grabe: in these treatises, there is no defence of the damnatory clause; nor, that I recollect, any mention of the Athanasian creed: there is no defence of the damnatory clause, in the sermons and English tracts published by Mr Nelson: nor, can I find any such tract mentioned by Mr Nelson, among the Bishop's lost works; for many small pieces, which it was known that he had written, were never found after his death. Where have I mentioned, Sir, with such high approbation, a work which I declare I have never seen; and of which, you will forgive me, if I still doubt the existence?*

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* Dr Priestley is reduced to the necessity of confessing, in the sixteenth of his Second Letters, that he knows no more than I, in what library any work of Bishop Bull's, upon the damnatory clause in the Athanasian creed, is to be found; and yet, he affects to be indignant, that I should presume to resent a false accusation; a calumny, founded on my pretended admiration of a work that never existed. It seems, when he spoke of this defence, he had in his mind the *Judicium Ecclesiæ Catholicæ*, but, "not looking into the title-page of the book," he described it by a wrong name: but unfortunately, his description is not more erroneous in the name, than in the subject: the occasion and manner of his error, may easily be divined: having no acquaintance with Bishop Bull's writings, but what his controversy with me hath occasioned, when he wrote his First Letters; he made a guess about the particular subject of each work, from the titles enumerated by me: among these, he found the "*Judicium Ecclesiæ Catholicæ*," &c. He guessed that this judgment of the Catholick church, which Bishop Bull defended, was a judgment founded on the damnatory clause in the Athanasian creed: so he guessed, that Bishop Bull, defending that judgment, must have defended the damnatory clause: and he chose to guess further, that I, the professed admirer of Bishop Bull, of all parts of his writings, the most admired that defence.

Dr Priestley hath since, indeed, looked further into this matter: and, at the

8. Had I been aware of the offence which I find the word *conventicle* hath given, I would have avoided the use of it: we are engaged in a subject, in which I hold it my duty to display my argument in its utmost force; and even to use pretty freely that high seasoning of controversy, which may interest the reader's attention; but I would not wilfully give offence by harsh words, from which the reasoning may acquire neither force nor lustre. You say, that the word conventicle usually signifies, an

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time when he drew up his Second Letters, he had discovered, that the judgment of the church, defended by Bishop Bull, is the anathema of the Nicene council, against those, who should in any way impugn the article of our Lord's divinity: this, Bishop Bull indeed defends; that is, he maintains the historical fact, that the fathers of the Nicene council enforced the belief of that article, under the solemn sanction of a publick sentence; which fact Episcopius had denied.

Dr Priestley, being now informed of the real subject of Bishop Bull's treatise, says, "that the damnatory clause in the Athanasian creed, and the anathema annexed to the Nicene, are things exactly of the same nature." Were I to undertake the defence of the damnatory clause in the Athanasian creed, it should indeed be upon this principle,—that it is a thing somewhat of the same nature with the anathema annexed to the Nicene: the anathema, is no part of the Nicene creed; it is only a sentence of the church, against the impugners of a particular article: what is called the damnatory clause, is no part of the Athanasian: it is a clause, not of the creed, but of a prefatory sentence, in which the author declares his opinion of the importance of the rule of faith he is about to deliver. But in whatever degree, the damnatory clause may be capable, or incapable, of apology, Dr Priestley is, I believe, the only writer, who ever confounded two things so totally distinct, as an anathema, and an article of faith; which he conceives the damnatory clause to be. An anathema, is simply a sentence of excommunication: the church of England anathematizes those, who speak disrespectfully of her Book of Common Prayer, (see the IVth Canon): but, that every person, who shall incur the anathema of the IVth Canon, shall perish everlastingly, is no clause of the church of England's creed.

Dr Priestley hath lengthened his sixteenth letter, with a recital of several passages from Bishop Bull's works, which, he thinks, must compel me to acknowledge, that, whatever I may be, Bishop Bull at least was a friend to damnatory clauses: the sentiments expressed by Bishop Bull, in the passages produced by Dr Priestley, I would be understood to cherish and embrace, with the most entire unqualified approbation. If to cherish such sentiments, and to be a friend to damnatory clauses, be the same thing, I stand convicted. *Habet confitentem reum.*

unlawful assembly: for my own part, I thought it barely equivalent to the old Greek word συνηλυσις, which was the name for certain irregular assemblies, not as illegal; for the word was brought into use, in an age, when all assemblies of Christians were, in the civil sense, equally illegal; but it was the name for assemblies, meeting for the purpose of religious worship, without authority from the bishop: such assemblies, in the primitive ages, were thought to be spiritually unauthorized; and in this sense, the word conventicle is applicable at this day to many religious meetings, which are not liable to any legal penalties. I could have wished, that the use of it had been considered as one of the mere archaisms of my style, in which nothing of insult was intended; I must however declare, that it would give me particular pleasure to receive conviction, that Mr Lindsey's meeting-house, and your own, are not more emphatically conventicles, in your sense; that is, in the worst sense of the word. From personal respect for you and him, I should be happy to be assured, that you stand not within the danger of the 35th of Eliz. c. i; or the 17th C. ii. c. 2. to the penalties of which, and of other statutes, I must take the liberty to tell you, you are obnoxious, notwithstanding the late act of the 19th of His present Majesty, in favour of dissenters, unless at the quarter-sessions of the peace for the county where you live, you have made a certain declaration,* which is required by that act, instead of the subscription to articles required by the former acts of toleration. I am sorry, Sir, to inform you, that I find no entry of Mr

* Appendix, No. VI.

Lindsey's declaration, in the office of the clerk of the peace, either for the county of Middlesex, or the city of Westminster: could I make the same inquiry concerning you, (which the distance of your residence prevents,) I fear I should have the mortification to find, that you have, no more than your friend, complied with the laws, from which you claim protection. A report prevails, that you both object to the declaration, from conscientious scruples: a very sufficient excuse for not making it; but no excuse at all, for doing what the law allows not to be done, except upon the express condition, that the declaration be previously made. Had you made the declaration, you might indeed be entitled to the same indulgence, by virtue of the late act, to which you would have been entitled, by a subscription to certain articles, under former acts of toleration; but not without the performance of certain other conditions, required by the 1st of William and Mary, c. 18, from which other conditions, dissenters are not released by any subsequent statutes: for the single operation of the 19th of our present gracious Sovereign, c. 44, is to substitute a short and general declaration, instead of a more particular subscription: all other limitations of the indulgences granted by the first of William and Mary, stand as they were. Had you therefore made the declaration, which the law demands, still to entitle your meetings to the benefit of the toleration, it would have been necessary that the places of them should be certified, (according to the last clause of 1st of William and Mary, c. 18,) either to the bishop of the diocese, or to the archdeacon of the archdeaconry, or to the justices of the peace at the general or quarter-sessions of the peace for the county, city, or place where such meeting may

be held.*——I have searched the registers of the episcopal court of London, of the archdeacon's court of Middlesex, and the records of the sessions for the county of Middlesex, and for the city of Westminster, for an entry of the house in Essex-street, without success :† about your meeting-house I am precluded, as before, from making a regular inquiry; but I fear you have not taken the proper measures for your legal security; because the professed ground of your dissent from the church of England, is not a mere disagreement about particular articles, but a general denial of the magistrate's authority, either to prohibit or to tolerate ;‡ still, Sir, were you ready to comply with the requisitions of the law in these two particulars, the declaration of your own belief in the holy Scriptures, and the notification of the place of meeting, to the ecclesiastical or the secular magistrate, Mr Lindsey and you, by the doctrines which you publickly maintain,‖ are excluded from all benefits of the acts of toleration: your meeting-house and his, contrary to your imagination, are *illegal;* UNKNOWN to the laws, and UNPROTECTED by them. If this be the definition of a conventicle, they are CONVENTICLES by the express letter of the law, and in your own construction of the word: still, Sir, I had no thought to insult over your miserable *unprotected* state: the extravagant outcry which you have made, and the arrogance with which you presume, to set

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* Appendix, No. V.

† See the seventeenth of Dr Priestley's Second Letters, and my Remarks upon the Second Letters, Part II. cap. iv. sec. 6.

‡ "Exclusive of every thing contained in the religion of the church of England, it is chiefly the authority by which it is enjoined, that dissenters object to in it." Hist. of Corrup. vol ii. p. 357.

‖ Appendix, No. IV.

your conventicles upon a footing with our own churches,* have provoked me to salute you with these unwelcome truths. Respect for individuals, in Mr Lindsey's congregation and in yours, as well as for you and him, would have restrained me from the use of a word which I had perceived to be any otherwise reproachful, than as it might contain a strong disapprobation and censure of your doctrine, and a serious disavowal of your authority to exercise the sacred function; if this is to be deemed reproach, I am not at liberty to abstain from it: your doctrine I must disapprove and censure; because I conceive it to be a gross, I trust not a wilful, corruption of the word of God. If your authority,—I speak not now of the authority which derives from human laws; but even in *that* you are deficient; for a mere exemption from civil penalties, which still is more than you enjoy, differs from authority, just as the king's pardon differs from his favour: if your spiritual authority, as ministers of the word and sacraments, is wrongfully called in question, you must bear with the prejudices of a churchman, who, when he reviews the practice of the primitive ages; when he ponders our Saviour's parting promise, to be always present with the apostles, the delegated preachers of the gospel, even to the end of the world; when he connects it with the history of the first ordinations, and with the great stress laid upon the Bishop's authority, by Clemens, the fellow labourer of St Paul; by Ignatius, the disciple of St John; and by the whole church for many ages; allows himself to be easily per-

* "——— our places of worship are as legal as yours—equally known to the laws, and protected by them." Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 112.

suaded, that the authority of the commission, under which he acts, is something more than mere human legislation can convey; and, while he would abhor to enforce civil penalties, may think it his duty occasionally to protest against a spiritual usurpation. Indeed, Sir, when I revolve in my thoughts, the various disorders and distractions, which I have seen in my own country, within the compass of my own life, arising from the irregular zeal of self-constituted teachers of religion; when I reflect, how the unity of the church hath been torn, how tender consciences are every day disturbed with groundless scruples, and melancholy tempers driven to insanity; how the simplicity of the vulgar hath been first abused, and their principles in the end unsettled; when I recollect, how eminently the state hath been lately endangered, and the Protestant cause disgraced, by a combination of wild fanaticks, pretending to associate for the preservation of the reformed religion; when I consider, how by these scandals, the true religion hath itself been brought into discredit; how it hath been injured, by attempts to inflame devotion on the one hand, and by theories, fabricated to reduce the mystery of its doctrines on the other; when I consider, that the root of all these evils hath been, the prevalency of a principle, of which you seem disposed to be an advocate; that every man who hath credit enough to collect a congregation, hath a right, over which the magistrate cannot, without tyranny, exercise control, to celebrate divine worship according to his own form, and to propagate his own opinions; I am inclined to be jealous of a prinple, which hath proved, I had almost said, so ruinous; and I lean the more to the opinion, that the commission of a ministry, perpetuated by regular succession, is

something more than a dream of cloistered gownmen, or a tale imposed upon the vulgar, to serve the ends of avarice and ambition. For whatever confusion human folly may admit, a divine institution must have within itself a provision for harmony and order; and, upon these principles, though I wish that all indulgence should be shown to tender consciences, and will ever be an advocate for the largest toleration that may be consistent with political wisdom, being indeed persuaded, that the restraints of human laws must be used with the greatest gentleness and moderation, to be rendered means of strengthening the bands of Christian peace and amity; yet I could wish to plant a principle of severe restraint, in the consciences of men: I could wish, that the importance of the ministerial office were considered; that the practice of antiquity were regarded; and that it might not seem a matter of perfect indifference to the laity, to what house of worship they resort. I cannot admit, that every assemby of grave and virtuous men, in which grave and virtuous men take upon them to officiate, is to be dignified with the appellation of a church; and for such irregular assemblies, which are not churches, I could wish to find a name of distinction void of opprobrium. As such, I used the word conventicle, as expressing great irregularity, (which I must express, wo! is me if I express it not,) but no infamy of the assemblies to which I applied it. If you are still disposed to be indignant about this harmless word, recollect I beseech you, with what respect you have yourself treated the venerable body to which I belong,—the clergy of the establishment—you divide it into two classes only: the ignorant, and the

insincere.* Have I no share in this opprobrium of my order? Have I no right to be indignant in my turn?

9. Still looking forward to the time, when after all that is past, we shall mutually forgive, and be ourselves forgiven, I remain,

DEAR SIR,
Your very humble Servant, &c.

Fulham Palace,
June 15th, 1784.

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* Dr Priestley, in his History of Corruptions, vol. i. p. 147, says of the Trinitarians of the present age, under which denomination it is evident he alludes to the clergy of the established church, for he afterwards describes these Trinitarians, as persons "to all of whom the emoluments of the establishment are equally accessible;" he says of these persons, that "they are all reducible to two classes, *viz.* that of those, who, if they were ingenuous, would rank with Socinians, believing that there is no proper divinity in Christ besides that of the Father; or else with Tritheists, holding three equal and distinct God's." The first class, surely must be insincere, as not believing what they profess; the second ignorant, as not perceiving what it is that they believe. In the conclusion of his History, vol. ii. p. 471, he says, that all that is urged in defence of the present system, by men of the greatest eminence in the church, who have appeared as its advocates, "is so palpably weak, that it is barely possible they should be in earnest—in thinking their arguments have that weight in themselves, which they wish them to have with others:" and he speaks of this insincerity of the defenders of the establishment, as a thing so notorious, that it may be reckoned "one of the worst symptoms of the present times." After all this, in his appendix to his Second Letters, he denies that he ever intended to make that division of the whole body of the established clergy, which I ascribe to him, into the two classes of the ignorant and the insincere: he treats the charge as a calumny, from which he justifies himself, by producing a long passage from one of his sermons, in which he professes to hold the church of England in no less estimation than the church of Rome.

APPENDIX.

No. I.

Gentleman's Magazine, for October, 1783, p. 842.

MR URBAN,

I WAS formerly a pupil of Dr Harwood, and read with my learned and worthy master, Thucydides, Sophocles, and the life of Moses, in a magnificent edition of Philo, printed by the learned Mr Bowyer; and wonder that Dr Horsley should assert, as he is represented to do by the learned and ingenious Mr Maty, in his New Review, that ὗτος is spoken of *persons* only; when it is applied to any thing of which the writer is speaking, that happens to be of the masculine gender. For instance, it is predicated of bread *twice* in John vi. 50, 58, ὗτος ἐστι ὁ ἄρτος, and of a stone, Luke xx. 17, *the same; viz.* stone, ὗτος is *become head of the corner.* Controversialists are apt to overshoot the mark.

GRÆCULUS.

No. II.

Gentleman's Magazine, for November, 1783, p. 944.

MR URBAN,

BE pleased, Sir, to inform your correspondent, *Græculus*, that Dr Horsley has not asserted of the Greek pronoun οὗτος, that it is spoken of persons *only*. He renders it indeed, in the second verse of the first chapter of St John's gospel, by the words "This Person," and he says, in a parenthesis, that "this is its natural force:" and this, Sir, may be, although by the usage of the Greek writers, it is applicable, as *Græculus* with great truth remarks, to any thing of which the writer is speaking, that happens to be of the masculine gender; for few words, in any language, are confined to their natural and primary meaning. But, since the application of the word is confessedly so general in the best writers, *Græculus* will perhaps be apt to put the question, how should Dr Horsley know, that "This Person," is more the natural sense of οὗτος, than "This Loaf," or this any thing? Perhaps Dr Horsley has observed, that it is peculiar to the two pronouns οὗτος, and ἀυτὸς, to be used of any one of the three persons; which is one argument, that their proper sense is personal. Perhaps Dr Horsley has observed, that the pronoun οὗτος, when it is demonstrative of any thing which has no person, and which the writer would not personify, is often put in the *neuter* gender, although the noun, which it represents, be masculine——ἐπειδαν δὲ ταυτα λυσητε——*after you have abrogated these* LAWS——τουτους. Demosth. Olynth. iii.—τουτο ἐστι το σωμα μου. this [*i. e.* this bread,

ἄρτος] is my body. Matt. xxvi. 6. This is another argument, that οὗτος is naturally demonstrative of a person: for there are but three causes, to which the various anomalies of speech may be referred; ignorance, negligence, design. Those, which are frequent in the best writers, can be ascribed to neither of the two first causes; they must have arisen therefore from the third: but the third, design, implies an end: and what should be the end of this anomaly of gender, in the word οὗτος, but that it was the means of avoiding an appearance of a *prosopopœia*, where no *prosopopœia* was intended.

2. Perhaps *Græculus*, though perfectly right in his remark, that οὗτος may be demonstrative of any thing of which the Greek name is masculine, has been unfortunate in his selection of passages in proof of it. Perhaps of the three, which he has produced, two are nothing to his purpose. Perhaps οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἄρτος, &c. in both the texts in St John, should be rendered "This person is the bread, &c." *i. e.* I am the bread, &c. It may be supposed that our Lord pointed to himself, when he said this; as the Baptist points to himself, when he says, Οὗτος γάρ ἐστιν ὁ ῥηθείς, &c. "For this person is the person spoken of, &c." *i. e.* For I am the person spoken of, &c. Matt. iii. 3. For that these are the Baptist's, not the historian's words, is evident from the form, in which the following sentence is begun. Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ Ἰωάννης. "Now this same John, &c." a form which marks the writer's resumption of his narrative, interrupted by the insertion of John's words.

3. Perhaps Dr Horsley had not erred, had he affirmed, that, in John i. 2. οὗτος must necessarily be rendered by "This Person." The utmost liberty of choice, which the context leaves, is between *two* expositions

only: "This Person," or "This Word." If the latter be adopted, the second verse will be only a useless repetion of what had been before affirmed; whereas, in Dr Horsley's view of it, it contains an explicit assertion of the personality of the Logos, which, with great propriety and significance, precedes the mention of his agency in the next verse.

4. Perhaps, to have read some two or three difficult authors with a master, may have made *Græculus* almost a match for the brightest boys in the upper forms of our publick schools. Perhaps something more should be done in the study of the Greek language, before a man begins to play the critick in it. Ἡ γαρ των λογων κρισις πολλης ἐστι πειρας τελευταιον ἐπιγεννημα.

I am, Sir,

Your most obedient,

PERHAPS.

No. III.

Short strictures on Dr Priestley's Letters to Dr Horsley, by an unknown hand.

LETTERS to Dr Horsley, page 9. Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. Dr Priestley should produce an instance, where the whole phrase of *coming in the flesh*, is applied to the birth or appearances of any mere man. The instances alledged by him, prove nothing to his purpose.

Page 13. The epistles of Ignatius. Dr Priestley is certainly in the right to reprobate these epistles, if he can; they subvert all his theology and his-

tory :* but, who are these learned in general, that have given them up as spurious? There are the names of great criticks on the other side, of whose arguments Archbishop Wake has given a judicious summary, in his preliminary discourse: and till they are refuted, Dr Horsley has an undoubted right to appeal to these epistles, as containing the sentiments of an apostolical father.

Page 14. If Dr Priestley could prove, that the Nazarenes held the same doctrines with the Ebionites, what would it avail his cause? Could he prove by this medium, that the Nazarenes *continued* in the doctrine of the apostles, and that the reputed Catholick church fell off from it? Did the Ebionites learn from the apostles, that John the Baptist came preaching in the days of Herod the king of Judea; that Christ descended into Jesus, in the form of a dove, at his baptism; *cum multis aliis?* See Epiphan. Hæres. xxx. sec. 14.

24. Here, and throughout, Dr Priestley supposes the Unitarian doctrine, to have had a general prevalence among the Gentile Christians, and universal among the Jewish. Does this well agree, with respect to the Gentiles, with his quotation from Origen, at the bottom of page 20?

The much controverted passage of Justin Martyr, in his Dialogue with Trypho,† and the meaning of Ἡμετέρου γένους, are well illustrated by Mr Bingham in his Vindication of the doctrine and liturgy of the Church of England, printed at Oxford, 1774, page 23. There were

* The chief of them are mentioned by Cave, under Ignatius.
† See Priestley, page 127.

according to Justin, SOME countrymen of his, Jews, and Samaritans, "who confess him to be the Christ, yet affirm him to be a mere man." The same Justin says in another place, First Apol. p. 78. Ed. Thirlby,—that he had observed more and truer Christians, from among the Gentiles, than from among the Jews and Samaritans. This passage, (which helps to confirm Mr Bingham's translation of Ἡμετέρου γένους,) compared with the other, contains the testimony of Justin, that there were only SOME of the Jews and Samaritans, and still fewer of the Gentiles, professing to believe in Christ, who affirmed him to be a mere man.

Page 39. Dr Priestley, who seems to be very moderately skilled in Greek, may give a faulty translation sometimes, through inadvertency: but what shall we say for his rendering *αἰτίαν ἔυλογον, a specious pretence?* Can he really think, that Athanasius meant to speak in this style, of the conduct of the apostles? Αἰτία ἔυλογος occurs in Chrysostom on Matt. xxiv. 42. (tom. ii, p. 448. Ed. Savil,) where though *αἰτία* signifies somewhat differently, ἔυλογος bears the same sense, as here, of wise and reasonable.

In the same passage ἔρχεσθαι is mistranslated. As the present infinitives, have sometimes a future sense in the best classick authors, it here means a Messiah TO COME, as the next sentence evinces, where Christ already come, is said ἐληλυθέναι.

49. Another inaccurate version of Athanasius.

50. Another of the like kind from Chrysostom. Dr Priestley makes him say,—our Saviour *never* taught his own divinity in express words. Chrysostom, I apprehend, says,—that he did not every where, or, on all occasions, *οὐ παγίως*, speak plainly of his own divinity.

In the Judgment of Chrysostom, he sometimes did so. See on John vi. 35, 36. viii. 58, x. 30.

56. Last paragraph—Caiaphas adjures our Saviour, by the living God, to tell them, *Whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God?* Our Lord avows, these characters, and adds, *Nevertheless* (rather, moreover) *I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power.* How can Dr Priestley be sure, in what sense Caiaphas understood our Lord's answer, when he rent his clothes, and accused him of blasphemy? Was the notion of a Son of God superior to all created beings, then unknown among the Jews? See, besides Bishop Bull's Defens. Fidei Nicænæ, cap. i. sect. i, § 16, p. 13, a remarkable passage quoted from Philo Jud. by Dr Randolph, Vindication of the doctrine of the Trinity, part I. p. 29.

LETTER V.

DR PRIESTLEY makes the fathers *acknowledge*, that the apostles did not preach the divinity of Christ *early*, and confidently supposes them *never* to have taught it.

According to the more general opinion, St Matthew wrote his gospel early, and for the Jews. In the opening of this gospel, he applies the name Emmanuel to our Lord, and gives his own interpretation of it, *God with us:* by which, plain people conceive him to mean what St Paul expresses, *God manifest in the flesh;* and the apostolical Ignatius, *God appearing in the form of a man.* Ad, Eph. xix. If we are led into an error, it

is by taking St Matthew's words in their literal and obvious sense: and was he less solicitous about the truth than even Dr Priestley himself? If Dr Priestley had been to write a gospel, according to his own theology, would he have set out with such an application and interpretation of the name Emmanuel? *Quod tu non feceris, Ego feci?* might St Paul ask; who writes with the greatest simplicity, and never uses any amplification of any subject treated by him: and, as we may justly conclude, would not here have spoken of Christ as he has done, but because he had very different notions of his dignity, from those of Dr Priestley: to declare which notions, he was not afraid of Jewish prejudices and clamour.

In the same gospel, our Lord is introduced declaring, "No one knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any one the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Here, the negative οὐδείς being universal, we seem to be told, that the Father and Son are incomprehensible to all created intelligences; and that all they can really know of the Father, must be in and through the Son, by his illuminating spirit. Does such a declaration consist with Dr Priestley's plan, with what our Lord says of himself in the next verse but one, "I am meek and lowly in heart?" *Utique parum modeste (sit verbo venia) de seipso locutus est Christus, aut alios loquentes audivit, si nihil interea præter merum hominem se esse noverit.* Burnet de Fide et Officiis, p. 20.*

* This is quoted by Dr Randolph, Vind. Part II, p. 42, where a similar passage is cited from St Chrysostom.

The same Saviour, in the concluding paragraph of this gospel, commands his apostles to evangelize all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Dr Priestley considers the Holy spirit as an attribute of the Father, not a person :—but does our Lord, if he had only an exalted humanity, thrust himself in between the Most High, and one of his incommunicable attributes? or does he join two persons with an attribute, in a most solemn form of words, which leads us almost inevitably to believe, that the third is a person also? Would such a conduct appear suitable to his care and tenderness, to guide his flock into the whole truth? The supposition seems impossible; and nothing can be more certain, than that the very first evangelist, in full harmony with all the succeeding sacred writers, exhibits to us the divinity of Christ, in the beginning, middle, and end of his gospel.

It is objected to this form of baptism, that the use of it does not appear any where in the Acts of the apostles. This objection is, I think, well answered by Mr Bingham, Vindicat. p. 37—41. particularly from Acts xix.

Page 63. Towards the end of the first paragraph, Dr Priestley seems to betray some suspicions, that St Paul did in truth teach the divinity of Christ.

Page 69. Last paragraph. The reasoning appears rather extraordinary on the passage of Athanasius, who seems made, by Dr Priestley, to consider things in the same light, between which he is studious to point out an eternal difference.

LETTER VII.

Page 92. "IF the doctrine of the Trinity be true, it is no doubt in the highest degree important and interesting." So Dr Priestley can say, when it serves his purpose. But how does this agree with his previous observations, No. IV. p. 85, &c.?

Page 133. It is somewhat hard to discover, how the remark on Eusebius, and his treatment of the Unitarians, *at that time very numerous*, agrees with the observation in the preceding paragraph.

Page 135. Was the hymn, which as Pliny tells us in his noted epistle, was sung to Christ *quasi Deo*, novel, in the time of Paul of Samosata?

Page 136. Dr Priestley should, I think, have prefixed that which seems to be his ruling maxim, that the human mind is competent to search all things, even the deep things of God.

Whether he, or Mr Burgh, in the first chapter of his Scriptural Confutation, lays down the province of reason in the better way, let others determine.

No. IV.

1 W. & M. c. 18.

PROVIDED always, That neither this act, nor any clause, article, or thing herein contained, shall extend ——to give any ease, benefit, or advantage to——any person that shall deny in his preaching or writing, the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, as it is declared in the aforesaid articles of religion.

No. V.

1 *W. & M. c.* 18.

PROVIDED always, That no congregation or assembly for religion, shall be permitted or allowed by this act, until the place of such meeting shall be certified to the bishop of the diocese, or to the archdeacon of the archdeaconry, or to the justices of the peace, at the general or quarter-sessions of the peace for the county, city, or place in which such meeting shall be held, and registered in the said bishop's or archdeacon's court respectively, or recorded at the said general or quarter-sessions.

No. VI.

19 *G. III. c.* 44.

——— be it enacted, ——— That every person dissenting from the church in holy orders, or pretended holy orders, or pretending to holy orders, being a preacher or teacher of any congregation of dissenting Protestants, who——shall take the oaths, and make and subscribe the declaration against popery, required by the said act, (1 W. & M. c. 18,) and shall also make and subscribe a declaration in the words following, *videlicet.*

"I A. B. do solemnly declare, in the presence of Almighty God, that I am a Christian and a Protestant, and as such, that I believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, as commonly received among Protestant churches, do contain the revealed will of God; and that I do receive the same as the rule of my doctrine

and practice." Shall be——entitled to all the exemptions, benefits, privileges and advantages granted to Protestant dissenting ministers, by 1 W. & M. c. 18, and by 10 A. c. ——and every such person, qualifying himself as aforesaid, shall be exempted from serving in the militia of this kingdom, and shall also be exempted from any imprisonment or other punishment, by virtue of the act of uniformity, &c.

A

SERMON

ON THE

INCARNATION,

PREACHED IN THE

PARISH CHURCH

OF

St MARY NEWINGTON,

In Surrey, Dec. 25, 1785.

A

SERMON,

&c.

LUKE i. 28.

——Hail! thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: Blessed art thou among women.

THAT she, who in these terms was saluted by an angel, should in after ages become an object of superstitious adoration, is a thing far less to be wondered, than that men, professing to build their whole hopes of immortality on the promises delivered in the sacred books, and closely interwoven with the history of our Saviour's life, should question the truth of the message which the angel brought. Some nine years since, the Christian Church, was no less astonished than offended, by an extravagant attempt* to heighten, as it was pretended, the importance of the Christian revelation, by overturning one of those first principles of natural religion, which had for ages been considered as the basis,

* Disquisitions relating to Matter and Spirit, &c. London 1777.

upon which the whole superstructure of revelation stands. The notion of an immaterial principle in man, which, without an immediate exertion of the Divine power, to the express purpose of its destruction, must necessarily survive the dissolution of the body; the notion of an immortal soul, was condemned and exploded, as an invention of heathen philosophy. Death was represented as an utter extinction of the whole man, and the evangelical doctrine of a resurrection of the body, in an improved state, to receive again its immortal inhabitant, was heightened into the mystery of a reproduction of the annihilated person. How a person once annihilated could be re-produced, so as to be the same person which had formerly existed, when no principle of sameness, nothing necessarily permanent, was supposed to enter the original composition; how the present person could be interested in the future person's fortunes; why *I* should be at all concerned for the happiness or misery of the man, who some ages hence shall be raised from my ashes; when the future man could be no otherwise the same with me, than as he was arbitrarily to be called the same, because his body was to be composed of the same matter which now composes mine: these difficulties were but ill explained. It was thought a sufficient recommendation of the system, with all its difficulties, that the promise of a resurrection of the body seemed to acquire a new importance from it, (but the truth is, that it would lose its whole importance, if this system could be established, since it would become a mere prediction concerning a future race of men, and would be no promise to any men now existing,) and the notion of the soul's natural immortality, was deemed an unseemly appendage of a Christian's belief, for this singular rea-

son, that it had been entertained by wise and virtuous heathens, who had received no light from the Christian, nor, as it was supposed, from an earlier revelation.

It might have been expected, that this anxiety to extinguish every ray of hope, which beams not from the glorious promises of the gospel, would have been accompanied with the most entire submission of the understanding to the letter of the written word; the most anxious solicitude for the credit of the sacred writers; the warmest zeal to maintain every circumstance in the history of our Saviour's life, which might add authority to his precepts, and weight to his promises, by heightening the dignity of his person. But so inconsistent with itself is human folly, that they who at one time, seemed to think it a preliminary, to be required of every one who would come to a right belief of the gospel, that he should unlearn and unbelieve what philosophy had been thought to have in common with the gospel, as if reason and revelation could in nothing agree; upon other occasions, discover an aversion to the belief of any thing, which at all puts our reason to a stand: and in order to wage war with mystery, with the more advantage, they scruple not to deny, that that Spirit which enlightened the first preachers in the delivery of their oral instruction, and rendered them infallible teachers of the age in which they lived, directed them in the composition of those writings, which they left for the edification of succeeding ages.* They pretend to have made

* "I have frequently declared myself, not to be a believer in the inspiration of the evangelists and apostles as writers." Dr Priestley's Letters to Dr Horsley, Part I. p. 182.

discoveries of inconclusive reasoning in the epistles;* of doubtful facts in the gospels: and appealing from the testimony of the apostles to their own judgments, they have not scrupled to declare their opinion, that the *miraculous conception of our Lord*, is a subject, "with respect to which, any person is at full liberty to think, as the evidence shall appear to him, without any impeachment of his faith or character as a Christian."† And lest a simple avowal of this extraordinary opinion should not be sufficiently offensive, it is accompanied with certain obscure insinuations,‡ the reserved meaning of which we are little anxious to divine, which seem intended to prepare the world not to be surprised, if something still more extravagant, if more extravagant may be, should in a little time be declared.

We are assembled this day, to commemorate our Lord's Nativity. It is not as the birth-day of a prophet that this day is sanctified; but as the anniversary of that great event, which had been announced by the whole succession of prophets, from the beginning of the world; and in which the predictions concerning the manner of the Messiah's advent, received their complete and literal accomplishment. In the predictions, as well as in the corresponding event, the circumstance of the miraculous conception, makes so principal a part, that we shall not easily find subjects of meditation, more suited either to the season, or to the times, than these two points; the importance of this doctrine, as an article of the Chris-

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* Hist. of Corrup. vol. ii. p. 370.
† Letters to Dr Horsley, Part I. p. 132.
‡ Ibid. p. 54.

tian faith, and the sufficiency of the evidence by which the fact is supported.

First, for the importance of the doctrine, as an article of the faith; it is evidently the foundation of the whole distinction between the character of Christ, in the condition of a man, and that of any other prophet. Had the conception of Jesus been in the natural way; had he been the fruit of Mary's marriage with her husband, his intercourse with the Deity could have been of no other kind, than the nature of any other man might have equally admitted: an intercourse of no higher kind than the prophets enjoyed, when their minds were enlightened by the extraordinary influence of the Holy Spirit. The information conveyed to Jesus, might have been clearer and more extensive, than any imparted to any former prophet; but the manner and the means of communication, must have been the same. The holy Scriptures speak a very different language: they tell us, that the "same God who spake in times past to the fathers by the prophets, hath in these latter days spoken unto us by his Son;"* evidently establishing a distinction of Christianity from preceding revelations, upon a distinction between the two characters of a prophet of God, and of God's Son. Moses, the great lawgiver of the Jews, is described in the book of Deuteronomy, as superior to all succeeding prophets, for the intimacy of his intercourse with God, for the variety of his miracles, and for the authority with which he was invested. "There arose not a prophet in Israel like unto Moses, whom Jehovah knew face to face: in all the signs and wonders

* Hebrews i. 1, 2.

which Jehovah sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharoah, and all his servants, and to all his land: and in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror, which Moses showed in the sight of all Israel."* Yet this great prophet, raised up to be the leader and the legislator of God's people; this greatest of the prophets, with whom Jehovah conversed face to face, as a man talketh with his friend; bore, as we are told, to Jesus, the humble relation of a servant to a son:† and lest the superiority on the side of the Son, should be deemed a mere superiority of the office to which he was appointed, we are told, that the Son is "higher than the angels," being the effulgence of God's glory, the express image of his person,"‡ the God "whose throne is forever and ever, the sceptre of whose kingdom is a sceptre of righteousness:"‖ and this high dignity of the Son, is alleged as a motive for religious obedience to his commands, and for reliance on his promises. It is this indeed which gives such authority to his precepts, and such certainty to his whole doctrine, as render faith in him the first duty of religion: had Christ been a mere prophet, to believe in Christ had been the same thing as to believe in John the Baptist. The messages indeed, announced on the part of God by Christ, and by John the Baptist, might have been different; and the importance of the different messages unequal; but the principle of belief in either, must have been the same.

Hence it appears, that the intercourse which Christ, as a man, held with God, was different in kind, from

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* Deut. xxxiv. 10—12.
† Heb. iii. 5, 6.
‡ Heb. i. 3—6.
‖ Heb. i. 8.

that which the greatest of the prophets ever had enjoyed: and yet how it should differ, otherwise than in the degree of frequency and intimacy, it will not be very easy to explain; unless we adhere to the faith transmitted to us from the primitive ages, and believe that the Eternal Word, who was in the beginning with God, and was God, so joined to himself the holy thing, which was formed in Mary's womb, that the two natures, from the commencement of the virgin's conception, made one person. Between God and any living being, having a distinct personality of his own, separate from the Godhead, no other communion could obtain, than what should consist in the action of the Divine Spirit, upon the faculties of the separate person. This communion with God, the prophets enjoyed: but Jesus, according to the primitive doctrine, was so united to the ever-living Word, that the very existence of the man, consisted in this union.* We shall not indeed find this proposition, that the existence of Mary's Son consisted from the first, and ever shall consist, in his union with the Word; we

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* So Theodoret, in the fourth of his Seven Dialogues about the Trinity, published under the name of Athanasius. The persons in this dialogue, are an Orthodox Believer, and an Apollinarian. The Apollinarian asks, Ουκ εσιν ȣν Ιησȣς ανθρωπος; the Believer replies, αγεν τȣ Λογȣ ȣτε ανθρωπον αυτον οιδα υποσαντα, την γαρ υπαρξιν αυτȣ εν τη ενωσει τȣ Λογȣ γνωριζω. To the same purpose Joannes Damascenus, ——— ȣ' γαρ προυποσαση καθ' εαυτην σαρκι ηνωθη ὁ Θειος Λογος, αλλ' ενοικησας τη γαστρι της αγιας παρθενȣ απεριγραπτως, εν τη εαυτȣ υποσασει εκ των αγιων της αειπαρθενȣ αιμαλων, σαρκα εψυχωμενην ψυχη λογικη τε και νοερα υπεσησατο, απαρχην προσλαβομενος τȣ ανθρωπειȣ φυραματος, ΑΥΤΟΣ Ὁ ΛΟΓΟΣ ΓΕΝΟΜΕΝΟΣ ΤΗ ΣΑΡΚΙ ΥΠΟΣΤΑΣΙΣ. De Fide Orthodoxâ, lib. 3. cap. ii; and again, cap. vii. Εσαρκωται τοινυν——— ωσε αυτην χρηματισαι τη σαρκι υποσασιν η' τȣ Θεȣ Λογȣ υποσασις. So also Gregory Nazianzen, ει τις διαπεπλασθαι τον ανθρωπον, ειθ' υποδεδυκεναι λεγοι Θεον, κατακριτος. ———Σιτις ως εν προφητη λεγοι κατα χαριν ενηργηκεναι, αλλα μη κατ' ȣσιαν συνηφθαι τε και συναπτεσθαι, ειη κενος της κρειττονος ενεργειας, μαλλον δε πληρης της εναντιας. Epist. ad Cledon. I.

shall not find this proposition, in these terms in Scripture. Would to God the necessity never had arisen, of stating the discoveries of revelation in metaphysical propositions! The inspired writers delivered their sublimest doctrines, in popular language, and abstained, as much as it was possible to abstain, from a philosophical phraseology. By the perpetual cavils of gainsayers, and the difficulties which they have raised, later teachers, in the assertion of the same doctrines, have been reduced to the unpleasing necessity, of availing themselves of the greater precision of a less familiar language.

But if we find not the same proposition in the same words in Scripture, we find in Scripture what amounts to a clear proof of the proposition. We find the characteristick properties of both natures, the human and the divine, ascribed to the same person. We read of Jesus, that he suffered from hunger and from fatigue; that he wept for grief, and was distressed with fear; that he was obnoxious to all the evils of humanity, except the propensity to sin. We read of the same Jesus, that he had "glory with the Father before the world began;"* that "all things were created by him,† both in heaven and in earth, visible and invisible; whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him"‡ and "he upholdeth all things by the word of his power:‖ and that we may in some sort understand, how infirmity and perfection should thus meet in the same person,

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* John xvii. 5.
† Ibid. i. 3.
‡ Coloss. i. 16.
‖ Heb. i. 3.

we are told by St John, that the "Word was made flesh."

It was clearly, therefore, the doctrine of holy writ, and nothing else, which the fathers asserted, in terms borrowed from the schools of philosophy, when they affirmed, that the very principle of personality and individual existence, in Mary's Son, was union with the uncreated Word.* A doctrine, in which a miraculous conception would have been implied, had the thing not been recorded; since a man, conceived in the ordinary way, would have derived the principles of his existence from the mere physical powers of generation. Union with the Divine nature, could not have been the principle of an existence physically derived from Adam; and that intimate union of God and man, in the Redeemer's person, which the Scriptures so clearly assert, had been a physical impossibility.

But, we need not go so high as to the Divine nature of our Lord, to evince the necessity of his miraculous conception: it was necessary to the scheme of redemption, by the Redeemer's offering of himself as an expiatory sacrifice, that the manner of his conception should be such; that he should in no degree partake of the natural pollution of the fallen race, whose guilt he came to atone, nor be included in the general condemnation of Adam's progeny. In what the stain of original sin may consist, and in what manner it may be propagated,

* Ὁ ουν Θεος Λογος σαρκωθεις, ουτε την εν τη ψιλη θεωρια κατανοουμενην φυσιν ανελαβεν (ου γαρ σαρκωσις τουτο, αλλ' απατη και πλασμα σαρκωσεως) αλλα την εν ατομω, την αυτην ουσαν τη εν τω ειδει (απαρχην γαρ ανελαβε του ημετερου φυραματος) ου καθ' εαυτην υποστασαν και ατομον χρηματισασαν προτερον, και ουτως υπ' αυτου προσληφθεισαν, αλλ' εν τη αυτου υποστασει υπαρξασαν· αυτη γαρ η υποστασις του Θεου Λογου εγενετο τη σαρκι υποστασις. Joann. Damascen. De Fide Orthodoxâ, lib. 3, cap. xi.

it is not to my present purpose to inquire: it is sufficient, that Adam's crime, by the appointment of Providence, involved his whole posterity in punishment. "In Adam," says the apostle, "all die:"* and for many lives thus forfeited, a single life, itself a forfeit, had been no ransom: nor, by the Divine sentence only, inflicting death on the progeny, for the offence of the progenitor; but by the proper guilt of his own sins, every one sprung by natural descent from the loins of Adam, is a debtor to Divine Justice, and incapable of becoming a mediator for his brethren. "In many things," says St James, "we offend all."† "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves," saith St John, "and the truth is not in us: and, if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins."‡ Even we Christians all offend, without exception even of the first and best Christians, the apostles. But St John clearly separates the righteous advocate from the mass of those offenders —that any Christian is enabled, by the assistance of God's Spirit, to attain to that degree of purity, which may entitle him to the future benefits of the redemption, is itself a present benefit of the propitiation which hath been made for us: and he, who, under the assault of every temptation, maintained that unsullied innocence, which gives merit and efficacy to his sacrifice and intercession, could not be of the number of those, whose offences called for an expiation, and whose frailties needed a Divine assistance, to raise them effectually

* 1 Cor. xv. 22. † James iii. 2.
‡ 1 John i. 8; and ii. 1.

from dead works, to serve the living God. In brief, the condemnation and the iniquity of Adam's progeny, were universal. To reverse the universal sentence, and to purge the universal corruption, a Redeemer was to be found, pure of every stain of inbred and contracted guilt: and since every person, produced in the natural way, could not but be of the contaminated race; the purity, requisite to the efficacy of the Redeemer's atonement, made it necessary, that the manner of his conception should be supernatural.

Thus, you see the necessary connexion of the miraculous conception, with the other articles of the Christian faith—the incarnation of the Divine Word, so roundly asserted by St John, and so clearly implied in innumerable passages of holy writ, in any other way, had been impossible; and the Redeemer's atonement, inadequate and ineffectual: insomuch that, had the extraordinary manner of our Lord's generation made no part of the evangelical narrative, the opinion might have been defended, as a thing clearly implied in the evangelical doctrine.

On the other hand, it were not difficult to show, that the miraculous conception, once admitted, naturally brings up after it, the great doctrines of the atonement and the incarnation. The miraculous conception of our Lord, evidently implies some higher purpose of his coming, than the mere business of a teacher; the business of a teacher, might have been performed by a mere man, enlightened by the prophetick spirit: for, whatever instruction men have the capacity to receive, a man might have been made the instrument to convey. Had teaching, therefore, been the sole purpose of our Saviour's coming, a mere man might have done the whole

business; and the supernatural conception, had been an unnecessary miracle: He, therefore, who came in this miraculous way, came upon some higher business, to which a mere man was unequal. He came to be made a sin-offering for us, "that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."*

So close, therefore, is the connexion of this extraordinary fact with the cardinal doctrines of the gospel, that it may be justly deemed a necessary branch of the scheme of redemption: and in no other light was it considered by St Paul, who mentions it among the characteristicks of the Redeemer, that he should be "made of a woman:"† in this short sentence, St Paul bears a remarkable testimony to the truth of the evangelical history, in this circumstance; and *you*, my brethren, have not so learned Christ, but that you will prefer the testimony of St Paul, to the rash judgment of those, who have dared to tax this "chosen vessel" of the Lord, with error and inaccuracy.

The opinion of these men, is indeed the less to be regarded, for the want of insight, which they discover, into the real interests and proper connexions of their own system: it is by no means sufficient for their purpose, that they insist not on the belief of the miraculous conception—they must insist upon the disbelief of it, if they expect to make discerning men proselytes to their Socinian doctrine: they must disprove it, before they can reduce the gospel to what their scheme of interpre-

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* 2 Cor. v. 21.

† Gal. iv. 4. "There is no reference to the miraculous conception, either in the book of Acts, or *in any of the Epistles*." Dr Priestley's Letters to Dr Horsley, p. 53.

tation makes it,—a mere religion of nature, a system of the best practical Deism, enforced by the sanction of high rewards, and formidable punishments, in a future life; which are yet no rewards and no punishments, but simply the enjoyments and the sufferings of a new race of men, to be made out of old materials; and therefore constitute no sanction, when the principles of the materialist, are incorporated with those of the Socinian, in the finished creed of the modern Unitarian.

Having seen the importance of the doctrine of the miraculous conception, as an article of our faith; let us in the next place consider the sufficiency of the evidence, by which the fact is supported.

We have for it, the express testimony of two out of the four evangelists: of St Matthew, whose gospel was published in Judea, within a few years after our Lord's ascension; and of St Luke, whose narrative was composed, as may be collected from the author's short preface, to prevent the mischief that was to be apprehended, from some pretended histories of our Saviour's life, in which the truth was probably blended with many legendary tales. It is very remarkable, that the fact of the miraculous conception, should be found in the first of the four gospels; written at a time, when many of the near relations of the Holy Family must have been living, by whom the story, had it been false, had been easily confuted: that it should be found again in St Luke's gospel; written for the peculiar use of the converted Gentiles, and for the express purpose of furnishing a summary of authentick facts, and of suppressing spurious narrations. Was it not ordered by some peculiar providence of God, that the two great branches of the primitive church, the Hebrew congregations, for

which St Matthew wrote, and the Greek congregations, for which St Luke wrote, should find an express record of the miraculous conception, each in its proper gospel? Or, if we consider the testimony of the writers, simply as historians of the times in which they lived, without regard to their inspiration, which is not admitted by the adversary; were not Matthew and Luke, Matthew, one of the twelve apostles of our Lord, and Luke, the companion of St Paul, competent to examine the evidence of the facts which they have recorded? Is it likely that they have recorded facts, upon the credit of a vague report, without examination? and was it reserved for the Unitarians of the eighteenth century, to detect their errors? St Luke, thought himself particularly well qualified for the work in which he engaged, by his exact knowledge of the story which he undertook to write, in all its circumstances, from the very beginning: it is said, indeed, by a writer of the very first antiquity, and high in credit, that his gospel was composed from St Paul's sermons; "Luke, the attendant of St Paul," says Irenæus, "put into his book the gospel preached by that apostle:" this being premised, attend I beseech you, to the account which St Luke gives of his own undertaking: "it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus; that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed." The last verse might be more literally rendered "that thou might know the exact truth of those doctrines, wherein thou hast been CATECHISED:" St Luke's gospel therefore, if the writer's own word may be taken about his own work, is an historical ex-

position of the *Catechism*, which Theophilus had learned, when he was first made a Christian. The two first articles, in this historical exposition, are the history of the Baptist's birth, and that of Mary's miraculous impregnation: we have much more therefore, than the testimony of St Luke, in addition to that of St Matthew, to the truth of the fact of the miraculous conception; we have the testimony of St Luke, that this fact, was a part of the earliest catechetical instruction: a part of the catechism, no doubt, which St Paul's converts learnt of the apostle. Let this then be your answer, if any man shall ask you a reason of this part of your faith; tell him, that you have been learning St Paul's catechism.

From what hath been said, you will easily perceive, that the evidence of the fact of our Lord's miraculous conception, is answerable to the great importance of the doctrine; and you will esteem it an objection of little weight, that the modern advocates of the Unitarian tenets, cannot otherwise give a colour to their wretched cause, than by denying the inspiration of the sacred historians, that they may seem to themselves at liberty to reject their testimony. You will remember, that the doctrines of the Christian revelation, were not originally delivered in a system; but interwoven in the history of our Saviour's life: to say therefore that the first preachers were not inspired, in the composition of the narratives in which their doctrine is conveyed, is nearly the same thing, as to deny their inspiration in the general: you will, perhaps, think it incredible, that they, who were assisted by the Divine Spirit, when they preached, should be deserted by that Spirit, when they committed what they had preached to writing: you

will think it improbable, that they, who were endowed with the gift of discerning spirits, should be endowed with no gift of discerning the truth of facts: you will recollect one instance upon record, in which St Peter detected a falsehood by the light of inspiration; and you will perhaps be inclined to think, that it could be of no less importance to the church, that the apostles and evangelists, should be enabled to detect falsehoods in the history of our Saviour's life; than that St Peter should be enabled to detect Ananias's lie, about the sale of his estate. You will think it unlikely, that they who were led by the Spirit into all truth, should be permitted to lead the whole church for many ages into error: that they should be permitted to leave behind them, as authentick memoirs of their master's life, narratives compiled with little judgment or selection, from the stories of the day, from facts and fictions in promiscuous circulation: the credulity, which swallows these contradictions, while it strains at mysteries; is not the faith which will remove mountains. The Ebionites of antiquity, little as they were famed for penetration and discernment, managed however the affairs of the sect, with more discretion than our modern Unitarians; they questioned not the inspiration of the books which they received; but they received only one book, a spurious copy of St Matthew's gospel, curtailed of the two first chapters. You will think it no inconsiderable confirmation of the doctrine in question, that the sect which first denied it to palliate their infidelity, found it necessary to reject three of the gospels, and to mutilate the fourth.

Not in words therefore and in form, but with hearts full of faith and gratitude, you will join in the solemn

service of the day, and return thanks to God, "who gave his only begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and, as at this time, to be born of a pure Virgin." You will always remember, that it is the great use of a sound faith, that it furnishes the most effectual motives to a good life. You will therefore not rest in the merit of a speculative faith. You will make it your constant endeavour, that your lives may adorn your profession ——that "your light may so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven."

REMARKS

UPON

DR PRIESTLEY'S

SECOND LETTERS

TO THE

ARCHDEACON OF ST ALBAN'S,

WITH

PROOFS OF CERTAIN FACTS ASSERTED BY THE ARCHDEACON.

PART FIRST.

REMARKS.

WHEN first I had the pleasure to peruse the Second Letters addressed to me by Doctor Priestley, upon the subject of our Lord's divinity, I was not ill satisfied to find the performance such, both in matter and style, as might have released me from all obligation to a formal reply; although I had made no previous declaration of the resolution, in which I am fixed, never to enter into a useless disquisition upon the main question—an exhausted subject, in which nothing new is to be said on either side;—nor to pursue an interminable controversy with one, whom, with high respect for his natural abilities, and for his attainments in some parts of learning, I must still call an insufficient antagonist. The dislike of trouble in my natural disposition is so strong, as too often, I fear, to strive for the mastery with better principles. I was well satisfied to find, that in the contest with Dr Priestley, I was at liberty to indulge my indolence, without seeming to desert my cause: that his book, abounding in new specimens of that confident ignorance, which in these subjects is the most prominent feature in his writings, and in expressions of fiery re-

sentment and virulent invective; carried with it, as I thought, its own confutation to unprejudiced readers of all descriptions: to the learned reader, by the proof which it furnishes of the author's incompetency in the subject; to the unlearned, by the consciousness, which the fierceness of his wrath betrays, of a defect of argument.

2. To mention a few instances: it gave me great satisfaction to perceive, that the whole confutation of the proof, which I had built upon the epistle of St Barnabas, of the orthodoxy of the first Hebrew Christians,* was to consist in an insinuation, that "doubts had been entertained by many learned men concerning the genuineness of that epistle;"† and in an assertion of my antagonist's, that it is most evidently interpolated; and that the interpolations respect the very subject of which we treat:"‡ the genuineness of the epistle, as a work of St Barnabas the apostle, had been expressly given up by me; its age, being the only circumstance of importance to my argument: for the notion, that it is evidently interpolated, particularly in what respects the subject of which we treat; the evidence by which the assertion is supported, is of that sort, which every one who engages in controversy, must rejoice that his adversary should condescend to employ. Some passages in the Greek text, which allude to our Lord's divinity, are not found, it seems, in the old Latin version; others relating to the same subject, appear in the old Latin

* See Letter eighth in Reply to Dr Priestley.

† Second Letters to the Archdeacon of St Alban's. p. 7.

‡ Ibid.

version only, and are not found in the Greek text:* that both the Greek text and Latin version, carry evident marks of the injuries of time; that defects, sometimes of a single word, sometimes of many words, sometimes of whole periods, abound in both, is known to every one who hath ever looked into the work: it is doubtless therefore, a very rational conclusion, that whatever is not found both in the original, and in the version, is in either an interpolation. That the hand of time must always have fallen upon the corresponding passages in the two copies, may be taken as a self-evident proposition! If any assertion therefore, of our Lord's divinity, occur in either copy, which is not found in both, the suspicion must be but too well founded, that some wicked Athanasian hath been tampering!

3. I was well pleased to find, that the two passages which my antagonist hath produced from the Greek text, as evident instances of interpolation, are not among those which I have cited. In these two passages, the divinity of our Lord is briefly alluded to: in every one of the four, cited by me, it is distinctly asserted, or strongly implied: of these four, two are found with inconsiderable varieties, both in the Greek and in the Latin; the other two in the Latin only: but that I lay the chief stress† upon either of the two, which are in the Latin version only, is a mere imagination of my adversary.

4. The satisfaction, which this confutation of my argument from Barnabas afforded me, was not a little heightened, by the manner in which I am convicted of

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* Second Letters, p. 7. † Ibid. p. 8.

an error, in the appeal, which, in my sixth letter to Dr Priestley, I made to the authority of Grotius, among others, in support of the opinion, which I maintain, of the orthodoxy of the Nazarenes, in the article of our Lord's divinity. Dr Priestley, in his First Letters to me, said, that I was singular in asserting this: to show that I was not singular in the assertion, (not to prove the thing asserted; for the proof of that I build entirely upon what is to be found in ancient writers; but to disprove the pretended novelty of the assertion,) I alleged the authorities of Grotius, Vossius, Spencer, and Huetius: "having examined," says my antagonist, in the third of his Second Letters, "the most respectable of these authorities, *viz.* Grotius, I find him entirely failing you, and saying no such thing as you ascribe to him:"* then, to prove that Grotius fails me, and says no such thing as I ascribe to him, Dr Priestley produces a passage from Grotius, to which I never meant to allude, and which is indeed nothing to the purpose, but he takes no notice of the passage upon which my assertion was built, and to which the margin of my publication referred him.

5. The satisfaction, which it gave me to find myself thus confuted, was still increased, by the retractation of this confutation in my adversary's Appendix, No. III. A retractation, which, in effect, is little less than a confession of the fraudulent trick, which, had not the advice of friends seasonably interposed, it is too evident, he meant to put upon the publick—I say upon the publick; for upon me he could not think that it would

* Second Letters p. 30.

pass; whatever may be his opinion of my learning; he has, I believe, had some experience of my vigilance, in watching the movements of an enemy; and he could not imagine, that the passage which he produces, would pass with myself for that which I cited. But he has heard perhaps from those who know me, of the constitutional indolence which domineers in my disposition; and under this circumstance, and the declaration which I had made of my intention to give him no reply, he thought himself secure against detection.

6. I must acknowledge another gratification which I received from this same No. III. of Dr Priestley's Appendix; I learnt from it, that Grotius, "when he speaks of the Nazarenes, as holding the common faith of other Christians, with respect to Christ;" meant only that they held something, which was *not* the common faith of other Christians:* and that Sulpitius Severus, when he says that "all the Jewish Christians till the time of Adrian, held that Christ was God, though they observed the law of Moses, *(Christum Deum sub legis observatione credebant.)* is to be considered as having said nothing more, than that almost all the Jews of Jerusalem were Christians, though they observed the law of Moses."† Certainly, the learned commentator and the historian, are to be so understood: for were they to be understood in the plain meaning of their words, they would flatly contradict Dr Priestley; which however, if they had done, it would have been no great matter: for any writer, who may contradict Dr Priestley, is little to be regarded.

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* "By the common faith of Christians in that early age, Grotius no doubt meant his *own opinion*, &c." Second Letters, p. 217.

† Second Letters, p. 218.

7. Dr Priestley has been reading the Parmenides!* Having taught the Greek language several years at Warrington, he conceived himself well qualified to encounter that profound book. The benefit, which he has received from the performance of this knotty task, exactly corresponds with my notion of his abilities for the undertaking: he has found the whole treatise unintelligible!† Perhaps he has, 'ere this, *looked through* the Enneads of Plotinus, with the like emolument: he must therefore be well qualified to illustrate the history of the Platonick doctrines, in the most mysterious parts: and in the GREAT WORK, with which the press now labours, his promise will, I dare say, be fulfilled, of teaching the world many things respecting them, of which his antagonist is ignorant. He can produce hundreds of passages to prove, that the "divinity which the orthodox Christians ascribed to Christ, was the very same principle, which constituted the wisdom and other powers of God the Father; and he can prove, that "this was agreeable to the principles of those Platonists, from whom Philo and the Christian fathers derived their opinion."‡ That the second person in the Platonick triad was, according to the theology of that school, the *principle of intelligence* in the Godhead, he will find indeed not difficult to prove; but, unless he can show, that this principle of Divine intelligence was not supposed, by the Platonists, to have had from all eternity a personality of its own, distinct from the personality of either of the two other principles; he will prove noth-

* Second Letters, p. 145.
† Ibid. ‡ Ibid. p. 124.

ing, but what is already known to every child in Platonism.

8. The GREAT WORK, will probably abound in new specimens of the proficiency which he has made in logick, under the tuition of the great Locke: it was not unpleasant to me, to find this great logician, confounding *being, substance, and substratum*:* that is, ignorant of the distinctions of ὑπαρξις (which seems to be Being in his language) οὐσια and ὑποκειμενον: to find him unapprized of that great principle, without which a logician will handle his tools but awkwardly, that the genus cannot be predicated of the specifick differences† (*a*); and, from an ignorance of this principle, falling into an error, into which indeed greater men than he have fallen, that Being is the universal *genus*, under which all other *genera* rank as *species*.

9. These, and many other glaring instances of unfinished erudition, shallow criticism, weak argument, and unjustifiable art to cover the weakness, and to supply the want of argument, which must strike every one, who takes the trouble to *look through* these Second Letters; put me quite at ease, with respect to the judgment, which

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* Second Letters, p. 198.

† "——— The former [being] is the genus, and the latter [person] the species," &c. p. 140.

(*a*) In the sixth of his Third Letters, sec. 5. Dr. Priestley courageously encounters this principle. To prove the fallacy of it, he says, "According to it, since *men* are divided into *Whites* and *Blacks*, &c. &c. it would follow, that it cannot with propriety be said of any Whites or Blacks, that they are *men*." A more curious instance of logical accuracy will not easily be found, than this deduction. The common *genus* of White men and Black men, I take to be *Man*. The specifick difference between them lies in colour. Of this I apprehend manhood cannot be predicated. But how does this lead to Dr Priestley's inference, that manhood is not predicable of any subject in which colour is found.

the publick would be apt to form between my antagonist and me; and confirmed me in the resolution of making no reply to him, and of troubling the publick no more upon the subject, except so far as might be necessary, to establish some facts, which he hath somewhat too peremptorily denied; and to vindicate my character from aspersions, which he hath too inconsiderately thrown out.

10. The matters of fact which I mean to prove are these.

I. Origen's want of veracity in disputation.

II. The existence of orthodox Hebrew Christians at Jerusalem, after the time of Adrian.

III. The decline of Calvinism, amounting almost to a total extinction of it, among the English dissenters.

11. The slander, which I mean to repel, is contained in my adversary's insinuation, that I have spoken with contempt of the doctrines of Calvin.

12. As for the outcry which he makes about my intolerance, and my bigotry to what he calls high-church principles, it gives me rather pleasure than uneasiness. I consider it, as the vain, indignant struggle of a strong animal, which feels itself overcome; the mere growling of the tiger in the toils; and I disdain to answer: I glory in my principles; I am proud of the abuse, which they may draw upon me; nor shall I pretend to apologize for the severity and warmth of my present language, or of any which I may think proper to employ in the ensuing pages. After the avowal which Dr Priestley has made, in his last publication,* of the

* See the Animadversions on Dr White's Sermons, annexed to Dr Priestley's discourse upon the Importance of Free Inquiry, p. 78.

spirit in which he has drawn his polemical sword ; it is time, that on our part also, the *scabbard should be thrown away.*

13. Dr Priestley's Second Letters to the Archdeacon of St Alban's are, at this instant, lying open before me, at the 53d page : my eye is attracted to a passage near the bottom, distinguished by a mark, which, in the first perusal of the work, I had set against it in the margin ; which reminds me, that it is one of those, in which I was the most captivated with the justness of the reasoning, and the frankness of the writer's declarations. Although I have already spent more time, than when I first took up my pen I thought to do, in culling the flowers of my adversary's composition, I cannot resist the temptation of stopping (although it delay for a few moments the business to which I hasten) to pluck this delicious blossom, which I had well nigh overlooked, sensible how much it will add to the brilliancy and fragrance of my posey.

14. Bishop Pearson alleges, that Ignatius, in his epistles to Polycarp, to the Ephesians, Magnesians, and Philadelphians, refers to the doctrine of the Ebionites as an heretical doctrine : these references, would demolish Dr Priestley's notion, that the Ebionites were not considered as hereticks, so early as in the times of Ignatius ; Dr Priestley therefore "finds no such references," in these epistles, "except perhaps two passages." Two clear references are just as good as two thousand : how then shall we dispose of these two passages ? Very easily—"they may easily be *supposed* to have been altered"—yes : suppositions are easily made ; and for that very reason, they are not easily admitted by wary men, without some other recommendation than

the bare ease of making them, joined to the consideration of the service, which a particular supposition may render to a party-writer, as a crutch for a lame argument. Upon what ground then may we build this supposition, which is so easily made, of an alteration in two passages in the epistles of Ignatius, which, as they now stand, contradict Dr Priestley? Upon the firmest ground imaginable: "when CORRECTED by an UNITARIAN, nothing is wanting to the evident purpose of the writer"—*Corrected by an Unitarian!* The Unitarians, if they are not shamefully belied by the ecclesiastical historians, have ever indeed, been ready at this business of *correction:* the Arians took the trouble to correct a treatise of Hilary of Poictou, in which, the heretical confession of the council of Ariminum was the subject: they corrected, and corrected, till the work became a novelty to its author. They, or the Macedonians, did the same good office for St Cyprian's epistles; and to circulate their amended copies more widely, they sold them at Constantinople, at a low price; similar liberties, were taken with the works of the two Alexandrians, Clemens and Dionysius: they, who thus corrected, were not deficient in the kindred art of forging whole treatises, under the names of the brightest luminaries of the church, in which the holy fathers were made to support heritical doctrines: the holy Scriptures were not unattempted, as appears by the testimony of those,* who lived at the time when the *amended* copies were extant in the world; who, in proof of the heavy accusation, appeal to the notorious disagreement of different copies,

* See Euseb. Ecc. Hist. lib. v.

which had undergone the revision of different heresiarchs. This is indeed, the confutation of the Unitarian doctrine, that both the primitive fathers, and the holy Scriptures, must be corrected in every page, before they can be brought to give evidence in its favour. It is because the Unitarians themselves have always understood this, that they have ever been ready to apply the needful *corrections,* when they thought the thing might be done without danger of detection; but the modern *Coryphæus* of the company, is, I believe, the first who ever had the indiscretion to avow the practice, and confess that he could not otherwise stand his ground, than by an appeal to the testimony of CORRECTED FATHERS! He is himself indeed a master of the art of correction: his attempt upon a passage in St John's first epistle, will never be forgotten.*

15. Will he dare to recriminate? He will.—"The orthodox, he says, as they are commonly called, have tampered with the New Testament itself, having made interpolations favourable to the doctrine of the Trinity, especially the famous passage concerning *the three that bear record in heaven.*"† The great name of NEWTON is brought up, to give weight to the accusation: "Newton, among others, has clearly proved, &c." and this he imagines, I myself will acknowledge: Dr Priestley, even before the inditing of these Second Letters, must have found himself deceived in so many instances, in his imaginations about me; how I would acknowledge,

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* See the charge to the clergy of the archdeaconry of St Alban's, I. sec. 5.

† Second Letters p. 13.

and how I would recant; how my eyes would be opened, by the information which he had to give me; that I wonder he should venture to imagine any more, in a subject in which he hath found himself so liable to error: he imagines, that I must acknowledge, that Newton hath clearly proved, that the record of the three in heaven in St John's first epistle, is an interpolation, made by some of those, whom I call the orthodox.—No: I acknowledge no such thing: Suppose I were to make the first part of the acknowledgment, that the passage is an interpolation; what consequence would bind me to the second, that the orthodox have been the wilful falsifiers? Is it because their purpose might have been served by the pretended falsification? Truly, their purpose had been poorly served by it: it is not agreed, among the orthodox themselves, that this text relates to the consubstantiality of the three persons in the Godhead: it is my own opinion, that it does not: and this I take to be the reason,—that it is so seldom alleged by the ancient writers in proof of the Trinity. But why must I acknowledge, that the passage is at all an interpolation? Because Newton and others have clearly proved it—to me, the proof is not clear: were the defect of positive proof in favour of the passage much greater, than Newton and others have been able to make out, it would still be with me an argument of its authenticity, that the omission of it breaks the connexion, and wonderfully heightens the obscurity, of the apostle's discourse. Dr Priestley perhaps imagines, that I hold myself bound to acknowledge whatever Newton hath attempted to prove: in his letters to me, and in his animadversions upon Dr White's celebrated discourses, he is

often pleased to boast of the probability* of what he knows, more than his antagonists; and that too, in subjects, in which he hath been convicted of the greatest want of knowledge: I hope I may say, without arrogance, that it is probable that Sir Isaac Newton's talents in demonstration, are as well known to me, as to Dr Priestley: it is probable too, that after the pains which I have taken, to examine the principles and the authorities, on which his ancient chronology is founded; I am as well qualified as Dr Priestley, to judge of his talents in other subjects, which are not capable of demonstration: now in these, I scruple not to say, with a writer of our own times, that the great Newton went out like a common man; for the exposition, which, to complete his argument against the record of the three in heaven, he gives of the context of the apostle's discourse, I hold it to be a model of that sort of paraphrase, by which any given sense may be affixed to any given words: but that even the external evidence of the authenticity of the passage, is so far less defective, than Newton and others have imagined, will be denied, I believe by few, who have impartially considered, the very able vindication of this celebrated text, which hath lately been given by Mr Travis, in his Letters to Mr Gibbon. Dr Priestley perhaps hath not found leisure to *look through* that performance; or, if he have, he hath formed, I suppose, "no very high opinion of the author's acquaintance with Christian antiquity:"† for

* Second Letters, p. 135, 146, 200, 202. Animadversions on Dr White, p. 66, 72.

† See Remarks on Mr Howes's discourse.

in this, all who oppose the Socinian tenets, are miserably deficient.

16. Here I close my remarks upon my adversary's reasoning; and I now proceed to the proof of my own facts, and the vindication of my own character.

PART SECOND.

PROOFS.

CHAPTER FIRST.

Of Origen's want of veracity.—Of the Fathers in general.—Of the passages in which St Chrysostom is supposed to assert, that the apostles temporized.—A specimen of correction *by an Unitarian.*

THE first fact that comes in question is, the want of veracity in disputation, which I impute to Origen.

2. In the second book against Celsus, near the beginning of the book, Origen asserts of the Hebrew Christians of his own times, without exception, that they had not abandoned the laws and customs of their ancestors; and that, for that reason they were called Ebionites. Dr Priestley sets a high value upon this testimony of Origen, as clearly establishing his great point, that the

Ebionites were nothing worse, than the Christians of the circumcision: I maintain, that if the truth of Origen's assertion were admitted, still his testimony would be less to Dr Priestley's purpose, than he imagines—it would prove, indeed, the Hebrew Christian, and the Ebionite, to be the same; but it would equally prove, that the disbelief of our Lord's divinity, was no necessary part of the Ebionæan doctrine. But I go further: I deny the truth of Origen's assertion in both its branches: I deny, that it is universally true of the Hebrew Christians, in his time, that they had not abandoned the Mosaick law; and I deny that it is true, that they were all called Ebionites: I say, that Origen himself knew better, than to believe his own assertion; and I say, that it was a part of Origen's character, not to be incapable of asserting, in argument, what he believed not.

3. Dr Priestley ill brooks this open attack, upon the credibility of one, whom he considers as a principal witness: he defends Origen, by retorting a similar accusation upon me; and, with the utmost vehemence of indignant oratory, he arraigns me at the tribunal of the publick, as a falsifier of history, and a defamer of the character of the dead.* From assertions which I have not rashly made, it must be something more terrible to my feelings, than the reproaches of Dr Priestley, loudly re-echoed by his whole party, that shall compel me to recede.

4. I say, then, that in the particular matter in question, Origen asserted a known falsehood: I say, in ge-

* Second Letters, &c. Preface, p. xviii. p; 47, 192.

neral, that a strict regard to truth, in disputation, was not the virtue of his character.

5. With respect to the particular matter in question: if I prove, that Origen knew the falsehood of his own assertion in the first branch of it, in which he avers, "that the Hebrew Christians in his time had not abandoned their ancient laws and customs;" no great stress, I presume, will be laid upon the second, "that they were all called Ebionites:" for, according to Origen's account of the reason of the name, (which yet I believe not to be the true one,) the two branches of his assertion, must stand or fall together.

9. It is an inconvenience which attends controversy, that it obliges both the writer and the reader to go frequently over the same ground: I must here repeat, what I observed in the seventh of my letters to Dr Priestley, that it is in answer to a reproach upon the converted Jews, which Celsus had put in the mouth of an unbelieving Jew, that by embracing Christianity, they were deserters of their ancient law; that Origen asserts, that the Jews believing in Christ had not renounced their Judaism. This assertion is made at the beginning of Origen's second book. Now at no greater distance than in the third section of the same book, the good father takes quite another ground to confute his adversary: he insults over his adversary's ignorance, for not making the distinctions, which he himself, in the allegation in question, had confounded. "It is my present point," says Origen, "to evince Celsus's ignorance, who has made a Jew say to his countrymen, to Israelites believing in Christ, *Upon what motive have you deserted the law of your ancestors?* But how have they deserted the law of their ancestors, who reprove

those that are inattentive to it, and say, *Tell me ye &c.?*"* Then, after a citation of certain texts from St Paul's epistles, in which the apostle avails himself of the authority of the law, to enforce particular duties; which texts make nothing either for or against the Jew's assertion, that the Christians of the circumcision had abandoned their ancient law; but prove only, that the disuse of the law, if it was actually gone into disuse, could not be deemed a dissertion; because it proceeded not from any disregard to the authority of the Lawgiver: after a citation of texts to this purpose, Origen proceeds in this remarkable strain. "And how confusedly does Celsus's Jew speak upon this subject? when he might have said more plausibly, SOME of you *have relinquished the old customs* upon pretence of expositions and allegories—SOME again expounding, as you call it, spiritually, nevertheless observe the institutions of our ancestors—but SOME, not admitting these expositions, are willing to receive Jesus as the person foretold by the prophets, and to observe the law of Moses according to the ancient customs, as having in the letter the whole meaning of the Spirit."† In these words, Origen confesses, all that I have alledged of him: he confesses, in contradiction to his former assertion, that

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* Νυν δε προκειται ελεγξαι την τȣ Κελσȣ αμαθιαν, παρ' ὡ ὁ Ιȣδαιος λεγει τοις πολιταις, και τοις Ισραηλιταις πιστευσασιν επι τον Ιησȣν, το. Τι παθοντες καταλιπετε τον πατριον νομον; και τα εξης. Πως δε καταλελοιπασι τον πατριον νομον οἱ επιτιμωντες τοις μη ακȣȣσιν αυτȣ, και λεγοντες. λεγετε μοι οἱ τον νομον, &c.

† ——— Και ως συγκεχυμενως γε ταυθ' ὁ παρα τω Κελσω Ιȣδαιος λεγει, δυναμενος πιθανωτερον ειπειν, οτι ΤΙΝΕΣ μεν υμων καταλελοιπασι τα εθη, προφασει διηγησεων και αλληγοριων· ΤΙΝΕΣ δε και διηγȣμενοι, ως επαγγελλεσθε, πνευματικως, ȣδεν ηττον τα πατρια τηρειτε· ΤΙΝΕΣ δε, ȣδε διηγȣμενοι, βȣλεσθε και τον Ιησȣν παραδεξασθαι ως προφητευθεντα, και τον Μωυσεως νομον τηρησαι κατα τα πατρια, ως εν τη λεξει εχοντες τον παντα τȣ πνευματος νȣν.

he knew of three sorts of Jews professing Christianity—one sort adhered to the letter of the Mosaick law, rejecting all figurative interpretations; another sort admitted a figurative interpretation, conforming, however, to the letter of the precept; but a third sort (the first in Origen's enumeration) had relinquished the observance of the literal precept, conceiving it to be of no importance, in comparison of the latent figurative meaning.

7. But this is not all: in the next sentence he gives us to understand, though I confess more indirectly, but he gives us to understand, that of these three sorts of Hebrews professing Christianity, they only, who had laid aside the use of the Mosaick law, were in his time considered as true Christians: for he mentions it as a further proof of the ignorance of Celsus, pretending, as it appears he did, to deep erudition upon all subjects, that in his account of the heresies of the Christian church, he had omitted *the Israelites believing in Jesus, and not laying aside the law of their ancestors:* "but how should Celsus," he says, "make clear distinctions upon this point; who, in the sequel of his work, mentions impious heresies altogether alienated from Christ, and others, which have renounced the Creator, and hath not noticed [or knew not of] Israelites believing in Jesus, and not relinquishing the law of their fathers?"* What opinion is to be entertained of a writer's veracity, who, in one page, asserts that the Hebrews professing Christianity had not renounced the Jewish law; and, in the next affirms, that a part of them had

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* Αλλα γαρ ποθεν Κελσος τα κατα τον τοπον τρανωσια, ος και αιρεσεων μεν αθεων, και τȣ Ιησȣ παντη αλλοτριων εν τοις εξης εμνημονευσε, και αλλων καταλειπȣσων τον δημιȣργον· ȣκ οιδε δε και Ισραηλιτας εις Ιησȣν πιστευοντας και ȣ' καταλιποντας τον πατριον νομον.

renounced it, not without an insinuation, that they, who had not, were hereticks, not true Christians? EGO HUIC TESTI, ETIAMSI JURATO, QUI TAM, MANIFESTO FUMOS VENDIT, ME NON CREDITURUM ESSE CONFIRMO.

8. I flatter myself, that I have established my charge against Origen, with respect to the particular fact in question: that a strict regard to truth in disputation, was not the virtue of his character, I shall now show by another strange instance of prevarication, which occurs in these same books against Celsus. Celsus, to deprive the Christian cause of all benefit from Isaiah's prophecy of the Virgin's conception, makes his Jew say, what hath since been said by many Jewish criticks without the least foundation, that the Hebrew word in Isaiah vii. 14, which is rendered by the LXX, *a virgin*, denotes only *a young woman:* Origen, in justification of the sense in which Christian interpreters understand the passage, cites* the law against the incontinence of betrothed virgins, in Deut. xxii. 23, 24, the word עלמה, which Christians understand of a virgin in Isaiah, being allowed, as Origen will have it, to denote a virgin in this passage of the law: but in this passage according to our modern Hebrew text, the word is not עלמה, but בתולה: Were it certain, that עלמה had been the reading in the copies of the age of Origen, a suspicion might arise, that the text had been corrupted by the Jews, for the purpose of depriving the Christians of one argument, in vindication of their interpretation of Isaiah; but there is something so suspicious, in the manner of Origens appeal to this text, that he is rather to be suspected of

* Contra Cels. lib. i. sec. 34.

prevarication, than the synagogue of fraud.——ἡ μεν λεξις ἡ Αλμα, ἣν οἱ μεν ἑβδομηκοντα μεθερμηνευσαν προς την παρθενον, ἀλλοι δε εἰς την νεανιν, κειται, ΩΣ ΦΑΣΙ, και ἐν τῳ Δευτερονομιῳ ἐπι παρθενου, &c. "The word עלמה which the LXX have translated into the word παρθενος [a virgin], but other interpreters, into the word νεανις [a young woman], is put too, AS THEY SAY, in Deuteronomy, for a virgin." What is this, *As they say?* Was it unknown to the compiler of the Hexapla, what the reading of the Hebrew text, in his own time was? If he knew that it was, what he would have thought it to be; why does he seem to assert upon hearsay only? If he knew not; why did he not inform himself? that he might either assert, with confidence, what he had found upon inquiry to be true; or not assert what could not be maintained. EGO HUIC TESTI, ETIAMSI JURATO, QUI TAM MANIFESTO FUMOS VENDIT, ME NON CREDITURUM ESSE CONFIRMO.

9. So much for Origen's veracity in argument, so unjustly aspersed by me, so completely vindicated by Dr Priestley.*

10. I will here take the liberty to remark upon the early fathers in general, whose memories are nevertheless to be revered, for their learning, and the general sanctity of their characters; that, in their popular discourses, and in argument, they were too apt to sacrifice somewhat of the accuracy of fact, to the plausibility of their rhetorick; or, which is much the same thing, they

* "I have completely vindicated the character of Origen, which you have endeavoured to blot." Second Letters, &c. p. 189. See a further defence of Origen's veracity, in the first of Dr Priestley's third Letters, and my Reply to that further defence, in the fifth of the Supplemental Disquisitions.

were too ready to adopt any notion, which might serve a present purpose, without nicely examining its solidity or its remote consequences. For this reason, the great profit which may arise from the study of their works, is rather that we may gather from them, what were the opinions and the practice of the whole body of the church, in the times wherein they lived; than, that any one of these writers is safely to be followed in all his assertions: instances of precipitation, in advancing what occurred at the moment, and served a present purpose, may be found, I believe, in the writings of no less a man than St Chrysostom: I shall mention one instance which occurs to me, which is very remarkable, though perhaps of little consequence. In his homilies upon the second epistle to the Corinthians, Chrysostom relates, that it was not agreed, in his time, who the person might be, who is described by St Paul as the "brother whose praise is in the gospel in all the churches:" that some thought St Luke was meant under this description; others St Barnabas: and, for a reason which he mentions, he gives it as his own opinion, that St Barnabas was probably the person intended—but, in his first homily upon the Acts of the Apostles, he no less than three times brings up this text, as an attestation of St Paul to St Luke's merit: for no other reason, but that this application of it, served the purpose of a rhetorical amplification of St Luke's praise.

11. Upon this circumstance, the notorious carelessness of the fathers in their rhetorical assertions, I should build my reply to the several passages which Dr Priestley hath produced from St Chrysostom, to prove that it was allowed by St Chrysostom, that the doctrine of the

Trinity had never been openly taught by the apostles; if those passages appeared to me, in the same light in which they appear to my antagonist: as for the particular passage in Athanasius, if any Unitarian, who reads the entire passage, thinks that the Jews there mentioned were converted, not unbelieving Jews, I must apply to him, what Dr Priestley remarks of those whom I esteem as orthodox, that "the minds of a few individuals may be so locked up, that no keys we can apply will be able to open them."* For St Chrysostom, I cannot find that he says any thing, but what I myself would say; that the apostles taught first what was easiest to be learned, and went on to higher points, as the minds of their catechumens became able to bear them: if I could allow that he hath any where said, what Dr Priestley thinks he finds in his expressions, that the apostles had been reserved and concealed upon an article of faith; I should say, that it was a thought that had hastily occurred to him, as a plausible solution of a difficulty, which deserved perhaps, no very diligent discussion in a popular assembly; and that he had hastily let it escape him. I am well persuaded, that any priest in Chrysostom's jurisdiction, who should have maintained this extraordinary proposition, that "the apostles had temporized, in delivering the fundamentals of the Christian faith," would have met with no very gentle treatment from the pious Archbishop of Constantinople: had the priest, in his own vindication, presumed to say; "Holy father, if I am in error, you yourself must answer for it; upon your authority I adopted the opin-

* Importance of Free Inquiry, p. 59.

ion, which you now condemn; you have repeatedly said in your commentaries upon the sacred books, that the apostles and the evangelists stood in awe of the prejudices of their hearers"—St Chrysostom would have replied: "Faithless monster! is it thy stupidity, or thy baseness, that interprets, as an impeachment of the sincerity of the first inspired preachers, my encomium of their wisdom? But why should I wonder, that he should not scrüple to slander his bishop, who spares not the apostles and evangelists!" Had the priest been able to prove against St Chrysostom, that he had indeed given countenance in his writings to such an error, the good father would have repented in sackcloth and ashes.

12. As the mention of Dr Priestley's quotations from St Chrysostom hath occurred, I must not omit to do justice to a passage, which hath suffered a little in the hands of this *emeritus* professor of Greek* in the late academy at Warrington. I speak of the passage cited by Dr Priestley, in his Second Letters, page 94, from the first homily on the epistle to the Hebrews: in the Greek, as Dr Priestley gives it, it is rank nonsense; and not very intelligible, in Dr Priestley's English: Dr Priestley, to get it into English at all, has had recourse to an emendation—an "ὑ must be turned into καὶ,

* "I ——— taught it nine years, the last six of them at Warrington." Second Letters, p. 202.

Ad summum, non Maurus erat, nec Sarmata, nec Thrax,
Qui sumpsit pennas, *mediis sed natus Athenis.*

But "the elements of the language, it seems, were not taught there." [Ibid.] The professor indeed, had the elements been to be taught, had been ill qualified for his chair.

or something else." Suppose ὐ turned into και, what will be the antecedent of the pronoun ἀυτος in the Greek, or of *himself* in Dr Priestley's English? Had Dr Priestley consulted any good edition of St Chrysostom, either the Paris edition of 1735, or the old Paris edition, of Fronto Ducæus, or the Eton edition, he would have found that ὐ γαρ ειπεν ὁ Θεος should be ὐ γαρ ειπεν ὁ Χριστος and that ὐ should keep its place: "Observe," says St Chrysostom, "the apostle's prudence in the choice of his expressions—for he hath not said, *Christ spake*, although he [*i. e.* Christ] was the person who spake; but because their minds were weak, and they were not yet able to bear the things concerning Christ, he says, *God spake by him.*"

13. The particular notion, that Christ was the Jehovah of the Old Testament, the person who conversed with the patriarchs, talked with Moses in the bush, displayed his tremendous glory at Sinai, and spake by the prophets; is what St Chrysostom thought the Hebrews not far enough advanced in the theory of revelation to bear: if he thought them too weak to bear the general doctrine of our Lord's DEITY, his judgment would be of little weight, since St Paul thought otherwise; for, in the second verse of the first chapter of this epistle, the apostle enters upon that abstruse subject, which, in the first verse, according to Dr Priestley's interpretation of St Chrysostom, he is supposed to shun; in the third verse, he goes deep into the mystery; and, in the eighth, he applies to Christ what the Psalmist says of God, that "his throne is forever and ever, the sceptre of his kingdom a sceptre of righteousness:" and the manner, in which the words of the Psalmist are introduced, shows that the apostle thought, that they, to whom he wrote,

could not but join with him in this application. Dr Priestley, I suppose, thought it as well to keep it out of the reader's sight, that St Chrysostom, in this very passage, speaks of Christ as the Jehovah of the Old Testament: he thought it best to keep the true meaning of the passage out of sight; and for this reason, he chose to take up the corrupt and senseless reading of the Heidelberg edition, (a bad copy of the Veronese text, in a very small part only, collated with the Palatin and Augustan manuscripts,) and rejecting an emendation unanimously received by later editors, who took the pains to rectify the text by a laborious collation of many manuscripts; to make the best of the passage for himself, by *correcting* in the wrong place: thus indeed, we have a beautiful specimen of an ancient father *corrected by an Unitarian!*

14. I must not quit the subject of these quotations, without observing, that the learned reader, in this first homily of St Chrysostom upon the epistle to the Hebrews, will find St Chrysostom's own confutation of the proof, which Dr Priestley attempts to bring from his works; that it was a thing known and admitted in his time, that the apostles had been silent upon the subject of our Lord's divinity; and that the orthodox, to account for this acknowledged fact, were reduced to the necessity of supposing, that they temporized. What the silence of the apostles, upon this subject was, may be learned from the epistle to the Hebrews: what St Chrysostom's opinion of their temporizing caution was, may be learned from his first homily upon that epistle: whoever reads only the two first sections of that homily, will perceive, that the prudence, which St Chrysostom ascribes to the apostles, was a prudence in the

manner of preaching mysterious doctrines, not a dishonest caution in dissembling difficulties: had he ascribed to them any such base art, the epistle to the Hebrews had been his confutation: his first homily on that epistle, is the confutation of those, who, in ignorance, or in art, would ascribe to him so unworthy a notion of the founders of our faith.

CHAPTER SECOND.

Of the church of Ælia, or Jerusalem, after Adrian.—Mosheim's narration confirmed.—Christians not included in Adrian's edicts against the Jews.—The return from Pella, a fact affirmed by Epiphanius.—Orthodox Hebrew Christians existing in the world long after the times of Adrian.

THE next fact that comes in question, is the existence of a body of orthodox Hebrew Christians at Jerusalem, after the final dispersion of the Jews by Adrian.

2. In the seventh of my letters to Dr Priestley, I stated briefly, what I take to be the true account, of the changes which took place in the ecclesiastical state of Palestine, upon the banishment of the Jews by Adrian. The ecclesiastical history of those times, is so very general and imperfect, that whoever attempts to make out a consistent story, from the ancient writers which are come down to us, will find himself under a necessity, of helping out their broken accounts, by his own conjectures. In the general view of the transactions of that time, I agree almost entirely with Mosheim; who, in my judgment, hath, with great penetration, drawn forth the whole truth; or what must seem to us the truth, because it carries the highest air of probability, from the obscure hints, which the histo-

rian Sulpitius furnishes, connected with other hints, which, though unobserved by Dr Priestley, are to be found in other writers of antiquity: Dr Priestley speaks of a series of facts,* and of many circumstances, which, he says, I have added to Mosheim's account, and "must know that I added:" if Dr Priestley consulted that part of Mosheim's work, *De Rebus Christianorum ante Constantinum*, to which the margin of my letters referred him (but in Mosheim, as in Grotius, it is likely that he turned to the wrong place), if he opened Mosheim in the place to which I referred, he must know, that I have added no circumstance to Mosheim's account; but such as every one must add, in his own imagination, who admits Mosheim's representation of the fact in its principal parts: he must know, that three circumstances in particular, which he is pleased to mention among my additions, are affirmed by Mosheim: the conflux of Hebrew Christians to Ælia; the motive, which induced the majority to give up their ancient customs; namely, the desire of sharing in the privileges of the Ælian colony; and the retreat of those, who could not bring themselves to give their ancient customs up, to remote corners of the country.† These were Mosheim's assertions before they were mine: and Dr Priestley either knows this, or, pretending to separate Mosheim's own account from my additions, he hath not taken the trouble to examine what is mine, and what is Mosheim's.

3. It may seem, however, that to convict my adversary of the crime of shameful precipitance, in asserting what he hath not taken the pains to know; or of the

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* Second Letters, p. 192. † Ibid. p. 39.

worse crime, of asserting the contrary of what he knows, absolves not me of the imputation, that I have related upon the authority of Mosheim, what Mosheim related upon none ;* I will therefore briefly state, the principles which determine me, to abide by Mosheim's account of the transactions in question. I take for granted, then, these things.

I. A church of Hebrew Christians, adhering to the observance of the Mosaick law, subsisted for a time at Jerusalem, and for some time at Pella; from the beginning of Christianity, until the final dispersion of the Jews by Adrian.

II. Upon this event, a Christian church arose at Ælia.

III. The church of Ælia, often, but improperly, called the church of Jerusalem, for Jerusalem was no more; the church of Ælia in its external form, that is, in its doctrines and its discipline, was a Greek church; and it was governed by bishops of the uncircumcision: in this, my adversary and I are agreed—the point in dispute between us is, of what members the church of Ælia was composed: he says, of converts of Gentile extraction; I say, of Hebrews; of the very same persons, in the greater part, who were members of the ancient Hebrew church, at the time when the Jews were subdued by Adrian. For again, I take for granted,

IV. That the observation of the Mosaick law, in the primitive church of Jerusalem, was a matter of mere habit and national prejudice, not of conscience: A

* Second Letters, p. 192.

matter of conscience it could not be; because the decree of the apostolical college, and the writings of St Paul, must have put every true believer's conscience at ease upon the subject. St Paul, in all his epistles, maintains the total insignificance of the Mosaick law, either for Jew or Gentile, after Christ had made the great atonement; and the notion that St Paul could be mistaken, in a point which is the principal subject of a great part of his writings, is an impiety, which I cannot impute to our holy brethren, the saints of the primitive church of Jerusalem.* Again, I take for granted,

V. That with good Christians, such as I believe the Christians of the primitive church of Jerusalem to have been; motives of worldly interest, which would not overcome conscience, would nevertheless, overcome mere habit.

VI. That the desire of partaking in the privileges of the Ælian colony, from which Jews were excluded; would accordingly, be a motive that would prevail with the Hebrew Christians of Jerusalem, and other parts of Palestine, to divest themselves of the form of Judaism, by laying aside their ancient customs.

4. Dr Priestley asks me, Where, Sir, do you find in this passage (a passage of Sulpitius Severus which he cites) any promise of immunities to the Jewish Christians, if they would forsake the law of their fathers?"† Nowhere, I confess, in this passage; nor in any other passage of Sulpitius; nor in any passage of any ancient, I

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* By the primitive church of Jerusalem, I mean the Hebrew church, before Adrian: the retreat to Pella was temporary; and, I am inclined to think of short duration; and the bishop, while he sat there, was still called the Bishop of Jerusalem.

† Second Letters, p. 42.

may add, nor of any modern writer—but the question, implies a false and fraudulent representation of my argument: I never spake, I never dreamed, of any promise of *particular* immunities to Jewish Christians upon condition that they renounced the Mosaick law: I spake only of the general immunities of the Ælian colony, of which Christians might, and Jews might not partake.*

5. Dr Priestley alleges, that, "the historian (Sulpitius) says, that the object of Adrian was to overturn Christianity:"† but whatever the emperor's dislike to Christianity might be, there is little probability that, upon this occasion, he would be disposed to treat Christians with severity. The historian Sulpitius nowhere says, that the emperor's edicts against the Jews extended to Christians; and the historian Orosius, says expressly, that to Christians they extended not:‡ Was Orosius too late a writer to give evidence about these transactions? The historian of Corruptions is, I believe, some

* Notwithstanding the explanation which I have here given, of what I said in the seventh of my Letters in Reply, of the exclusion of Jews, and of Jews only, from the privileges of the Ælian colony; Dr Priestley, in his Third Letters, has the assurance to tell me, "You say, that the Jews were allowed to remain in the place, and enjoy the privileges of the Ælian colony, *on condition* of their becoming Christians:" as if I had mentioned this, as an article of capitulation between the emperor and the Jews:—I conceive, that I have expressed my meaning too plainly to be misapprehended, by those who choose to understand—I never conceived, I have nowhere said, "that Adrian was so well disposed to Christianity, as to permit the Rebellious Jews to remain in Jerusalem, on condition of their embracing it:" but I suppose, that the emperor might distinguish between rebels and those who had been good subjects. The Hebrew Ghristians had taken no part in the rebellion; and yet, had they not discarded the Jewish rites, they might have been mistaken for Jews.

† Second Letters, p. 42.

‡ ——— præcepitque ne cui Judæo introeundi Hierosolymam esset licentia, Christianis tantum civitate permissâ. Oros. Hist. lib. 7. cap. xiii.

centuries later; His means of information therefore, are fewer; and, were he well informed, his precipitance in assertion, and his talent of accommodating his story to his opinions, should annihilate the credit of his evidence. The testimony of Orosius, however inconsiderable, might of itself therefore outweigh the opinion of Dr Priestley; if a feather only, in the one scale, be more than a counterpoise for a nothing in the other.

6. The testimony however, of Orosius, is not without some indirect confirmation from other writers; and, what is more, from its consistency with other circumstances in the history of those times, with which the assertion of Sulpitius, that Adrian meant to wound Christianity through the sides of Judaism, will not easily accord. It is a notorious fact, that Adrian was not unfavourable to the Christians: the church, in his reign, obtained a respite from persecution; the fury of its persecutors was restrained, by the imperial rescripts to the provincial governors; who were directed, not to proceed against the Christians, except by way of regular trial, upon the allegation of some certain crime: and when nothing more was alleged than the bare name of Christianity, to punish the informer as a sycophant: a rescript to this effect, addressed to Minucius Fundanus, proconsul of Asia, is preserved by Justin Martyr in his first apology; and after Justin, by Eusebius in his history.* (*a*) This equitable disposition of the emperor towards the Chris-

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* Hist. Eccl. lib. iv. c. 8, 9.

(*a*) Dr Priestley, in the second of his Third Letters, contends that these rescripts meant nothing more, than that no one should be punished as a Christian, until he was proved to be such; but this had been no indulgence; for every Christian might have been proved to be a Christian, by his own confession: the writers of the times, boast of these rescripts as indulgences.

tians, is ascribed by Eusebius to the eloquent apologies of Quadratus and Aristides, and to the remonstrances of Serenius Granianus, the predecessor of Fundanus in the Asiatick Proconsulate.* When the Jewish war broke out, reasons of state, immediately took place, which would greatly heighten the effect of any impressions, previously made upon the emperor's mind by the pleadings of the Christian apologists, and the intercessions of what friends they might have among his courtiers: the Christians of Palestine refused to take any part in the Jewish rebellion; and they smarted under the resentment of Barchochebas, the leader of the insurgents: the earliest testimony now extant of this fact is, I believe, that of Eusebius in his chronicle:† but the known impiety of Barchochebas, which renders it incredible that the Christians should enlist under his banners, sufficiently avouches the truth of the chronologer's assertion: the thing therefore, in itself, is highly probable, that the emperor should make the distinction which, Orosius says, he made between the seditious Jews and the harmless Christians; who had, indeed, been sufferers by their loyalty. The probability is still increased, by certain circumstances mentioned by historians, which indicate a particular antipathy in the imperial court, at this time, to the rites of Judaism; which the refractory manners of the Jews might naturally excite: Spartian says, that a prohibition of circumcision was one of the pretences of the Jewish rebellion:‡ Modestinus the

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* Hist. Eccl. lib. iv. c. 3; and in Chron. ad. ann. MMCXLII.

† Ad annum MMCXLIX.

‡ Movebant eâ tempestate et Judæi bellum, quod vetabantur mutilare genitalia. *Spartian in Adriano.*

lawyer, as he is cited by Cassaubon, alleges a rescript of Antoninus, granting a permission to the Jews, to circumcise their own children: this rescript of permission, as it plainly implies, that the practice had been forbidden by some preceding emperor, in some measure confirms Spartian's relation: all these circumstances put together, create, as the thing appears to me, the highest probability of the truth of Orosius's assertion: that Christians were not included in the edicts of Adrian, by which the Jews were banished from Jerusalem; and, although no author that I know of, beside Orosius, expressly mentions the distinction; the contrary, that the Christians were included, is affirmed by no ancient writer: the distinction indeed, though not mentioned, is clearly implied in Epiphanius's assertion; that the Hebrew Christians, after Adrian's settlement of the Ælian colony, returned from Pella, whither they had retired from the distresses of the war, to Ælia; for it happens, that this fact, of which Dr Priestley does me the honour to make me the inventor, is asserted by Epiphanius: Epiphanius, having related that Aquila, the same person, who afterwards made a translation of the scriptures of the Old Testament into Greek, was employed by Adrian, as overseer of the works at Ælia, proceeds in these words: ὁ τοινυν Ακυλας, διαγων ἐν τῃ Ιερυσαλημ, και ὁρων τυς μαθητας των μαθητων των ἀποστολων ἀνθυητας τῃ πιστει, και σημεια μεγαλα ἐργαζομενυς ἰασεων και ἀλλων θαυμαζων· ἠσαν γαρ ΥΠΟΣΤΡΕΨΑΝΤΕΣ ΑΠΟ ΠΕΛΛΗΣ της δεκαπολεως εις Ιερυσαλημ. και διδασκοντες· ἠνικα γαρ ἐμελλεν ἡ πολις ἁλισκεσθαι ὑπο των Ρωμαιων, προεχρηματισθησαν ὑπο ἀγγελυ πανται οἱ μαθηται μεταστηναι ἀπο της πολεως, μελλυσης ἁρδην ἀπολλυσθαι· οἱτινες και μεταναστας γενομενοι ὠκησαν ἐν Πελλῃ τῃ προγεγραμμενῃ πολει περαν τυ Ιορδανυ, ἥτις ἐκ δεκαπολεως λεγεται εἰναι· μετα δὲ

την ἐρημωσιν Ιερυσαλημ ΕΠΑΝΑΣΤΡΕΨΑΝΤΕΣ. *ὡς ἐφην, σημεια μεγαλα ἐπετελων ὁ τοινυν Ακυλας, κ. τ λ.* Epiph. *De Pond et Mens.* Whether this return of the Christians of Jerusalem from Pella, took place in the interval, between the end of Titus's war and the commencement of Adrian's, or after the end of Adrian's, is a matter of no importance: it is sufficient for my purpose, that these returned Christians were residing at Jerusalem, or more properly at Ælia, at the same time that Aquila was residing there as overseer of the emperor's works: let not the publick therefore be abused by any cavils, which ignorance or fraud may raise, about the chronology of the return.* To this assertion of Epiphanius, Mosheim,

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* Dr Priestley, in the third of his Third Letters, has treated this testimony of Epiphanius just as I expected, and indeed predicted: he first endeavours to embarrass the argument with some chronological difficulties; and then gets rid of it in his own peculiar manner, by making positive testimony submit to his own theory. "What can be more evident," he says, "than that the return of the Jewish Christians from Pella, mentioned in this passage by Epiphanius, is that return which followed the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus?" Be it so. It is granted then, that some of the Jewish Christians, who fled to Pella during Titus's war, returned to Jerusalem afterwards: but the question is, not at what time the Jewish Christians, whom Aquila found at Ælia, had returned thither; but at what time he conversed with them: Epiphanius says, he conversed with them at the time that he was superintendent of Adrian's works at Ælia: at that time therefore, there were Hebrew Christians settled at Ælia, or they could not then have conversed with Aquila. I maintain, that there is no reason to believe, that the Hebrew Christians quietly settled at Ælia, before the Jewish rebellion, were included in Adrian's edict for the banishment of the Jews.

But Dr Priestley remarks further, upon the authority of Cave, that Aquila's translation of the Old Testament, was made in the 11th or 12th year of Adrian: then, since that translation was undertaken in consequence of his apostacy, and his apostacy was some considerable time after his conversion; Dr Priestley infers, that his conversion "was probably prior to the reign of Adrian;" and so, the whole story of his intercourse with the Jewish Christians at Ælia, while he was residing there in the time of Adrian, is discredited.

Perhaps, to assign the exact year of Aquila's translation, would prove a task of no less difficulty to any who should attempt it, than to determine the day of the

relating the fact, refers: relating the same fact to Mosheim, I referred* to the very passage,† where Dr Priestley, had he known what it is to examine authorities before he pronounces upon them, might have found the reference to the original author: the confidence with which he mentions this, as a fact forged by me, is only one instance, out of a great number, of his own shameless intrepidity in assertion.

7. But, to return from the detection of Dr Priestley's fictions, to the historical discussion. It may seem, that my six positions go no further, than to account for the disuse of the Mosaick law, among the Christians of Palestine, upon the supposition that the thing took place; and that they amount not to a proof, that a church of Hebrew Christians, not adhering to the rites of Judaism, actually existed at Ælia: to complete the proof therefore, I might appeal to Epiphanius's assertion, of the return of the Christians of Jerusalem from Pella: but I will rather derive the proof, from a fact which I

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week. and the hour of the day, when the last word of that work was written; the learned Cave had, as far as I know, no reason for fixing Aquila's translation to the 11th or 12th of Adrian; but that Epiphanius says, that in the 12th year of Adrian, "Aquila first became known: but if Epiphanius is to be believed, Aquila first became known by Adrian's appointment of him to so considerable an office, as that of overseer of the publick works at Ælia. This was in the 12th year of Adrian: his conversion to Christianity was some time subsequent to that apointment; his apostacy, at some considerable distance of time, subsequent to his conversion, and his translation of the Old Testament subsequent to his apostacy: so that, the time of that translation, can be no otherwise defined than thus: that it certainly was not earlier than the 12th of Adrian, and probably, was later by an interval of many years.

My argument therefore from Epiphanius, stands its ground, and the caution which I gave the publick, not to be abused by cavils which might be raised about the chronology of the return from Pella, is but too much justified by the event.

* Letters to Dr Priestley, p. 61.

† De Rebus Christianorum ante Constantinum. Sæc. II. sec. 38. note[e].

think more convincing than the testimony of Epiphanius; a fact, by which that testimony is itself indeed confirmed. I affirm then,

VII. That a body of orthodox Christians of the Hebrews, were actually existing in the world, much later than in the time of Adrian.

8. The testimony of Origen I hold too cheap, to avail myself of his triple division of the Hebrew Christians, to prove the existence of the orthodox set, in his time; it must be observed, however, that, were his evidence at all admissible, his distinction would be somewhat a stronger proof for me, than his general assertion, of which the generality is discredited by the distinction afterwards alleged, can be allowed to be for my antagonist. But I give him Origen. I will rest the credit of my seventh position, upon the mention which occurs in St Jerome's commentary upon Isaiah, of Hebrews believing in Christ as distinct from the Nazarenes: St Jerome relates two different expositions of the prophecy, concerning Zabulon and Naphtali, delivered in the beginning of the ninth chapter of Isaiah; of which expositions he ascribes the one to the *Hebrews believing in Christ;* the other, to the *Nazarenes*—the character given of these Hebrews, that "they believed in Christ," without any thing to distinguish their belief from the common belief of the church, without any note of its error or imperfection, is a plain character of complete orthodoxy: for it was neither the disposition of St Jerome, nor the fashion of his age, to miss any opportunity of proclaiming the vices of those, who were deemed hereticks; unless upon occasions, when some rhetorical purpose might be answered by concealing them; but no rhetorical purpose was to be answered, in these notes

upon Isaiah, by a concealment of any error, that had been justly to be imputed to these Hebrews; nor was St Jerome at all concerned to maintain the particular exposition which he ascribes to them: he had therefore no inducement to conceal their errors—but he taxes them with none: he had therefore no harm to say of them: they were orthodox believers; and the distinction of them from the Nazarenes, made by St Jerome, is a plain proof that they were not observers of the Mosaick law: for although the Mosaick law was observed, in the orthodox church of Jerusalem, until the time of the suppression of the Jewish rebellion by Adrian; it was after his time, by my adversary's own confession, confined to the Nazarenes and the Ebionites: if then the Hebrews believing in Christ, observed not the Mosaick law in the time of St Jerome, since the Mosaick law had been observed by the first race of believing Hebrews; it follows, that the practice of the Hebrew congregations had undergone a change, at some time before the age of St Jerome. Dr Priestley says, that great bodies of men change not their opinions soon: I say, they never change their old customs and inveterate habits, but from some powerful motive: now, in what period of the history of the church, shall we find a posture of affairs, so likely to induce the Hebrew Christians to forsake the Mosaick law, as that which obtained in Palestine, upon the final dispersion of the Jews by Adrian? If the orthodox Christians of the Hebrews, actually existing somewhere in the world, from the reign of Adrian to the days of St Jerome, were not members of the church of Ælia, dwelling at Ælia, and in the adjacent parts of Palestine, Dr Priestley, if he be so pleased, may seek their settlement: it is no small difficulty upon my adversary's side, that he

can neither tell "what became of the Christian Jews," upon his supposition, that with the unbelieving Jews they "were driven out of Jerusalem by Adrian;"* nor, from what quarter the Greek church of Ælia was furnished with its members.

9. Upon these foundations, which a stronger arm than Dr Priestley's shall not be able to tear up, stands "the church of orthodox Jewish Christians at Jerusalem:"† to which the assertors of the catholick faith will not scruple to appeal, in proof of the antiquity of their doctrine, whatever offence the very mention of the orthodox church of Jerusalem, may give to the enraged hæresiarch.‡

10. He asks me, what evidence I can bring that this church, even before the time of Adrian, was Trinitarian: I brought evidence in my letters,‖ which he hath not been able to refute: upon his own principles, the acknowledgment of their orthodoxy in later times, by writers who would have acknowledged no orthodoxy of any Unitarian sect, might be a sufficient evidence of their earliest orthodoxy: the evidence which I have brought, is nothing less than an attestation of a member of this earliest Hebrew church, to the belief of himself, and his Hebrew brethren, in our Lord's divinity. But "*If* they were Nazarenes, (says Dr Priestley,) Epiphanius represents them as Unitarian, when John

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* "What became of the Christian Jews who were driven out of Jerusalem by Adrian, does not appear." Second Letters, &c. p. 45.

† "Thus ends this church of orthodox Jewish Christians at Jerusalem, &c." Second Letters, p. 44.

‡ "— I hope, *(id populus curat scilicet)* I hope, however, we shall hear no more of them as an evidence of the antiquity of the Trinitarian doctrine." Second Letters, p. 45.

‖ See particularly Letter VIII.

wrote."* I have said, and I will never cease to say, that Epiphanius's representation justifies no such opinion: but what is Epiphanius's account of the Nazarenes, or, what is any account of the Nazarenes to the purpose, *if* the Hebrews of the church of Jerusalem were no Nazarenes? With St Jerome, the Hebrews believing in Christ, and the Nazarenes, are different people.

N. B. Dr Priestley's objections to the evidence brought from St Jerome, in proof of my seventh position, which he hath advanced in the fourth of his Third Letters, are answered in the sixth of the Supplemental Disquisitions.

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* Second Letters, p. 43.

CHAPTER THIRD.

Of the Hebrew church, and its sects.

IT must strike the learned reader, that the Nazarenes mentioned by St Jerome, in the passage to which I now refer, of his annotations on Isaiah; must have been a different people from those, mentioned by him with such contempt in his epistle to St Austin, and described by Epiphanius. The Nazarenes, here mentioned by St Jerome, held the scribes and pharisees in detestation; their traditions in contempt; and the apostle St Paul in high veneration :* and yet these Nazarenes, of the best sort, were still a distinct set of people from the Hebrews believing in Christ; that is, from the orthodox church of Jerusalem, divested, in consequence of Adrian's edicts against the Jews, of what, until the time of those edicts, it had retained of the exterior form of Judaism. These remarks lead, I think, to a more distinct notion of the different sects of Hebrews, professing the Christian religion, than I have met with in writers of ecclesiastical antiquity; a much more distinct one, I confess, than I had myself formed, when I delivered the Charge to the clergy of my archdeaconry, which gave the beginning to this controversy; a notion however, perfectly consistent with every thing which I

* See St Jerome in Is. ix. 1, 2, 3, et viii. 14, 19—22.

then maintained; and tending to establish the points, in which I differ from Dr Priestley: as the question about the Hebrew sects is of great importance, I shall here briefly state the sum of what I have found concerning them in ancient writers, and then propound my own conclusions.

2. The Nazarenes are not mentioned by Irenæus: Irenæus says of the Ebionites,* that they acknowledged God for the maker of the world;—that they resembled not Cerinthus or Carpocrates, in their opinions about Christ;—that they used only the Gospel by St Matthew;—were over curious in the exposition of the prophets;—disowned the apostle Paul, calling him an apostate from the law;—circumcised, and retained the Jewish laws and Jewish customs. This description of the Ebionites occurs, in that part of the great work of Irenæus, which is extant only in a barbarous Latin translation: in the passage which relates to their opinions about Christ, Cotelerius suspects a corruption; and for *non similiter,* he would read *consimiliter;* supposing that Irenæus must have affirmed, that he could not deny, their resemblance of Cerinthus and Carpocrates in that article; and this indeed is agreeable, as will appear, to the descriptions given of the Ebionites by other writers.

3. Irenæus in another place insinuates, that for wine, in the Eucharist, the Ebionites substituted pure water.†

4. Tertullian says, that Ebion made Jesus a mere man, of the seed of David only, that is, not also the Son of God; in some respect, higher in glory than the

* Irenæus, lib. i. c. 26.
† Ibid. lib. v. c. 2.

prophets:* in another place † he says, that Ebion was the successor of Cerinthus; not agreeing with him in every particular, inasmuch as he allowed that the world was made by God, not by angels: that, as a consequence of Christ's mere humanity, he maintained the lasting obligation of the Mosaick law; because it is written, that the disciple is not above the master, nor the servant above his lord: Tertullian says nothing expressly, about the agreement, or disagreement of Ebion and Cerinthus, in their notions of Christ; but the impiety of maintaining that he was a mere man, the son of Joseph, he ascribes to Carpocrates and Cerinthus as well as Ebion; which renders the emendation, proposed by Cotelerius, in the Latin version of Irenæus, *consimiliter* for *non similiter*, very probable: especially, as a further agreement of the Ebionites and Gnosticks, in their notions about Christ, is maintained by other writers. Tertullian again, in another place, having mentioned "that St Paul, writing to the Galatians, inveighs against the observers and defenders of circumcision and the law," adds, "this was Ebion's heresy:"‡ this, however, is no argument that Ebion lived when that epistle was written; Tertullian means only to remark, that Ebion's tenets, in this article, were clearly confuted by St Paul's writings. In the same place, he mentions the denial of the resurrection of the body, by Marcion, Apelles, and Valentinus, as an error reproved in St Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians: but no one, I imagine, would thence conclude, that Marcion, Apelles, and Valentinus, were contemporaries of the apostle.

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* De carne Christi, c. 14. † De Præscript. Hæret. c. 48.
‡ De Præscript. Hæret. c. 33.

5. Origen, in the second book against Celsus, seems to comprehend the whole body of the Hebrew Christians under the name of Ebionites; and affirms, that they adhered to the law of their fathers:* but in another place, where he professes to describe the Christianity of the Hebrews with the greatest accuracy, he divides the whole body into three sects: the first, like other Christians, entirely discarded the Mosaick law; the second, retained the observation of the law in the letter of the precept, admitting however the same spiritual expositions of it, which were set up by those who discarded it; the third sort, not only observed the law according to the letter, but rejected all spiritual expositions of it.†

6. Eusebius divides the Ebionites into two sorts, both denying our Lord's divinity; but the better sort, believing the miraculous conception:‡ both rejected the epistles of St Paul, whom they called an apostate from the law: they used the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*, and held the canonical gospels in little esteem: they kept both the Jewish Sabbath and the Christian Sunday. Origen and Eusebius, like Irenæus, mention not the Nazarenes by name.

7. St Jerome, in his commentary upon Isaiah, mentions Hebrews believing in Christ;‖ and, as a distinct set of people from these believing Hebrews, he mentions Nazarenes who observed the law,§ but despised the traditions of the Pharisees, thought highly of St Paul,¶ and held the doctrine of our Lord's divinity: for, by an exposition of Isaiah viii. 13, 14, which St

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* Contra Cels. lib. ii. sec. 1. † Ibid. 3. ‡ Hist. Ecc. lib. iii. c. 27.
‖ In Is. ix. 1, 2, 3. § Ibid. and viii. 14, 19—21. ¶ Ibid.

Jerome ascribes to them, it appears that they acknowledged in Christ the יהוה צבאות [the Lord God of hosts] of the Old Testament. In his epistle to St Augustin,* St Jerome describes Nazarenes of another sort, "who believed in Christ the Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary, in whom the orthodox believe;" but were, nevertheless, so bigotted to the Mosaick law, that they were rather to be considered as a Jewish sect than a Christian. In the same place, he speaks of the Ebionites as a sect anathematized for their Judaism, and falsely pretending to be Christians; and in his commentary upon St Matthew xii. he says, they acknowledged not St Paul's apostolical commission.

8. Epiphanius describes the sect of the Nazarenes, as a sect of people hardly to be distinguished from Jews; he expresses a doubt, whether they acknowledged our Lord's divinity: but the terms in which his doubt is expressed, argue that it was groundless.† He describes the Ebionites as resembling the Samaritans, rather than the Jews;—as maintaining that Jesus was the son of Mary, by her husband;—that the Christ, descending from heaven in the figure of a dove, entered into Jesus at his baptism. He says, that the Nazarenes and the Ebionites, had each a Hebrew gospel, (the only one which they received,) which they called the gospel by St Matthew;—that the copies received by the two sects were different: compared with the true gospel by St Matthew, which the church receives, the Ebionæan copy was the least entire, and the most corrupt: he speaks of the Ebionites, as a sect which branched

* Hieron. Op. tom. ii. f. 341. A. edit. Froben.

† Charge to the clergy of the archdeaconry of St Alban's. I. sec. 10, 11.

off from the Nazarenes, and appeared not till after the destruction of Jerusalem.*

9. From the testimony of an ancient writer, cited by Eusebius, it appears, that one Theodotus, a native of Byzantium, a tanner by trade, at the very end of the second century, was the first who taught the mere humanity of Christ.† He preached at Rome. His doctrine was an extension of the impiety of the first Ebionites: for, with them, the humanity of Christ, was over at his baptism.‡ He was then deified; or, at least, exalted above humanity, by the illapse of the Christ.

10. Now, from all this, I seem to gather, that after the destruction of Jerusalem, the Hebrew church, if under that name we may comprehend the sects which separated from it, was divided into five different sets of people.

I. St Jerome's Hebrews believing in Christ: these were orthodox Christians of Hebrew extraction, who had laid aside the use of the Mosaick law.—They are the same with the first set, in Origen's threefold division of the Hebrew Christians.

II. Nazarenes of the better sort, orthodox in their creed, though retaining the use of the Mosaick law: as they were admirers of St Paul, they could not esteem the law, generally necessary to salvation. If these people were all heretical, I should guess that it was in this single point, that they received the gospel of the Nazarenes, instead of the canonical gospels.

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* Epiph. Hær. 30.

† Hist. Ecc. lib. v. c. 28.

‡ See more upon this point, in Mr Howes's sermon.

III. Nazarenes of a worse sort, bigotted to the Jewish law, but still orthodox, for any thing that appears to the contrary in their creed: these were the proper Nazarenes, described under that name by Epiphanius, and by St Jerome in his epistle to St Austin. These two sects, the better and the worse sort of Nazarenes, make the middle set in Origen's threefold division.

IV. Ebionites denying our Lord's divinity, but admitting the fact of the miraculous conception.

V. Ebionites of a worse sort, denying the miraculous conception, but still maintaining an union of Jesus with a divine being, which commenced upon his baptism. These two sects, the better and the worst sort of Ebionites, make the last set in Origen's threefold division.

11. Thus we find a regular, and no unnatural gradation, from the orthodox Hebrew Christian to the blaspheming Ebionite. It appears, however, that the impious degradation of the Redeemer's nature, though it took its rise among the Hebrew sects, was not carried to its height among them: a sect of proper Unitarians, holding the perpetual undeified humanity of the Saviour, made its first appearance at Rome, and boasted for its founder, Theodotus, the apostate tanner of Byzantium, if, indeed, it was not the growth of still later times, which seems to be the opinion of the learned Mr Howes, to whose judgment I am inclined to pay great regard. These two points, however, seem certain: that the Nazarenes, even of the best sort, were a different people from the Hebrew brethren of the orthodox church of Jerusalem; and that the Nazarenes, even of the worst sort, were believers in the divinity of our Lord. In what extent they believed it, may, perhaps, seem to some a question in some degree still open to discussion: at pre-

sent, I see no reason to recede from the opinion, which, with great authorities upon my side, I have hitherto maintained, of their entire orthodoxy upon that article; if, upon that particular point, I should, at any time hereafter, see cause to think myself mistaken, my conviction is not likely to come from Dr Priestley, but from a very different quarter: Mr Howes's 9th number is just fallen into my hands; that learned writer, I perceive, thinks that it was but a subordinate divinity, which the Nazarenes acknowledged in our Lord; for his opinion, I feel all the deference which one scholar owes to the sentiments of another; but not without the strongest prepossessions, I confess, at present, in favour of my own.

CHAPTER FOURTH.

Of the decline of Calvinism.—Of Conventicles.

I NOW pass to the third fact, which I have taken upon me to establish: the decline of Calvinism, amounting almost to a total extinction of it, among our English dissenters, who, no long time since, were generally Calvinists.

2. This fact is of no great importance in our controversy; as it is but very remotely connected with the question, about the opinions of the first ages. The rapid decline of Calvinism here in England, was alleged by me as an instance, in which Dr Priestley's *theorem*, about the rate of velocity, with which the opinions of great bodies of men change; would lead, in the practical application of it, to very erroneous conclusions. If my instance was ill-chosen, it will not immediately be a consequence, that Dr Priestley's theorem is a false principle for the reformation of the history of the primitive church, in defiance of the testimony of the earliest writers extant. It would give me great pleasure to find myself in an error with respect to this fact; and to see reason to believe Dr Priestley, in his assertion, that the great body of our dissenters at this day are Calvinists. So many Calvinists as are among them, so many friends there are to the Catholick faith in all its essential branches; for the peculiarities of Calvinism, affect

not the essentials of Christianity: but I am sorry to say, that I must still believe, that the genuine Calvinists among our modern dissenters, are very few; unless, in a matter, which hath so lately fallen under the cognizance of the British legislature, I could allow Dr Priestley's assertion, to outweigh the plain testimony of facts of publick notoriety.

3. If the great body of the dissenters are, at this day, Calvinists; upon what pretence was it, that the dissenting ministers, who, in the years 1772 and 1773, petitioned Parliament to be released from the subscriptions, to which they were held by the 1st of William and Mary, arrogated to themselves the title, of the GENERAL BODY of dissenting ministers, of the three denominations in and about London? No true Calvinist could concur in that petition. For, although I cannot admit, that the articles of our church, in the doctrinal part, affirm the strict tenets of Calvinism; yet they are in this part, what, as I conceive, no true Calvinist would scruple to subscribe; and, with respect to the great doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation, Justification, and Grace, every genuine Calvinist, would start at the very thought of being supposed, even tacitly to concur in a request, to be released from a confession of his faith: for none better understands, than the genuine Calvinist, the force of that sacred maxim, "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Would Dr Priestley insinuate, that his brethren of the Rational dissent, approached the august assembly of the British Parliament, with a petition founded upon false pretensions? Will he say, that they were, in fact, the minority of the body, of which they called themselves the generality? Will he

say, that the Thirteen,* who in the meeting of the General Body at the Library, in Red-cross Street, on Wednesday, December the 23d, 1772, divided against the vote for an application to Parliament to remove the restraints, which the wisdom of our forefathers, by the Act of Toleration, had imposed; were the representatives of a more numerous body, than the Fifty-five who gave their suffrages for the motion :† who at a subsequent meeting, suffered not the protest of the thirteen orthodox ministers, to be recorded in the minutes of the business of the day; and with difficulty permitted their reasons to be read ?‡ A proceeding, by the way, which clearly shows, how cordially these pretended friends of general toleration, would delight, were they in power, to tolerate opinions which might differ from their own; and evinces the propriety of the prayer, which a sense of such wrongs, drew from a member of the orthodox minority, "From the power of such pretenders to superior reason, may GOD and THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT ever defend the orthodox dissenters."|| These thirteen, spake only the sentiments of every Calvinist, when they said, "We believe the doctrines of the articles to be both true and important: We dare not therefore consent, to be held up to view as those, who indulge any doubts respecting their truth, or at all hesitate about

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* See a pamphlet entitled, "A Collection of the several Papers, relating to the Application made to Parliament, in 1772 and 1773, by some of the Protestant Dissenters, for Relief in the matter of Subscription, &c." London, printed for J. Wilkie, No. 71, St Paul's Church-yard. MDCCLXXIII.

† See Wilkie's Collection, No. III.

‡ Ibid. No. II.

|| See "Candid Thoughts on the late Application of some Protestant dissenting ministers, &c. By an Orthodox dissenter." London, printed for W. Goldsmith, No. 20, Paternoster-Row, 1772.

their importance. We consider them as the basis of our hope, the source of our comfort, and the most powerful incentive to a course of sincere, steadfast, cheerful obedience."* It were injustice to these worthy men, to let pass any occasion, of mentioning their names with the reverence which is due to them. David Muire, John Rogers, Thomas Towle, Samuel Brewer, Edward Hitchin, Thomas Oswald, John Potts, John Trotter, John Macgowan, George Stephens, Joseph Popplewell, Henry Hunter, John Kello; these were the venerable confessors, who, on the 23d of December, 1772, and on the 27th of January in the following year, in meetings of the General Body of the three denominations, stood *for the faith once delivered to the saints.* "They thought themselves bound, they said, to contend earnestly for it, against all who should oppose it." For this purpose they formed, as I gather from the documents of the times,† into a distinct association. When the petition of the Rationalists was laid before the Parliament, they were firm and active in their opposition to it; considering the request as little less than a blow, craftily aimed at the very vitals of the reformed religion, and, indeed, of Christianity itself. They presented a cross petition,‡ signed, as they themselves said, by the ministers as well as the laity, of the most respectable congregations of real Protestant dissenters in town and country: but, when they wished to give credit and authority to their opposition, by boasting of their numbers, the most that they could say, of the number of ministers

* See Wilkie's Collection, No. II. sec. 3.
† Ibid. No. III. and IV. ‡ Ibid. No. V.

who had signed the cross petition, was this: that they were "upwards of Fifty." The number of dissenting ministers in the whole kingdom, was reckoned at that time to be about 2000, of which 50 is just the fortieth part: when Dr Priestley therefore affirms, that the "majority of the dissenting ministers are still Calvinists," he must be understood to use the same rhetorical figure, by which, in the Postcript of his First Letters to me, he swelled a few periods of Clemens Alexandrinus to the size of a whole book. By a computation formed upon that instance, I concluded the proportion of the Priestleian to the vulgar *whole*, to be that of 1 to 48; from this new instance, it turns out somewhat larger.

4. Thus, from the evidence of publick facts, I have the mortification to find Dr Priestley's sentiments confuted, and my own confirmed, concerning the present state of Calvinism among the English dissenters: and, however it may now serve Dr Priestley's purpose, to magnify the numbers of the Calvinists; his Rational brethren, in the year 1772, spoke of their own majority, in terms which implied, that the Calvinists were, in their judgment, a very inconsiderable part of the whole body of the dissenters. "It is admitted," say the Rationalists, in the *Case of the Protestant dissenting Ministers and Schoolmasters*, "that the greater part of the dissenting ministers have not complied, and cannot in conscience comply, with the subscription required by the Act of Toleration: the dissenting ministers in general are, consequently, liable to the penalties abovementioned." After stating the relief which they desired to obtain, they allege, that the "generality of Protestant dissenting ministers, together with their people, are hap-

pily united in the object of the present application."* The petitioning dissenters, it seems, in the year 1772, thought the Calvinists so few and inconsiderable, that the ministers, who could not in conscience comply with the 1st of William and Mary, and were happily united in the object of the application at that time made to Parliament, seemed to them the generality of Protestant dissenting ministers. These gentlemen knew, it is to be presumed, the state of the dissent. They meant not to impose a lie upon the three estates of the British legislature—for *they were all, all honourable men!* If then my notion of the decline of Calvinism is erroneous, Dr Priestley will at least confess, that I am countenanced and supported in my error, by a very respectable authority.

5. I am not ignorant indeed, that this authority was treated with little respect by the protesting Calvinists; who allowed no superiority of numbers on the side of the Rationalists:† it was pretended, that many Calvinists concurred in the petition: some in mere tenderness for scrupulous consciences; many more upon that goodly principle, the source of all that orderly submission to the higher powers, which hath ever been so conspicuous in the Puritans of this country; that even a true faith, is not to be confessed at the requisition of the magistrate. I bear that good will to Calvinism, that it gives me real concern to remember, that it hath ever been disgraced by a connexion with such a principle; I am inclined however to believe, that the Calvinists,

* See Wilkie's Collection, No. I.

† See "Candid Thoughts, &c. by an Orthodox Dissenter," sec. II.

who, upon puritanical principles, concurred in the petition of the Rationalists, in the year 1772, were very few; and that the orthodox dissenters were deceived, in the idea which they had formed, of the numbers of their own party. The requisition of the magistrate is now removed, and no pretence exists for a puritanical reserve; I would ask then, what is now the state of the dissenting ministry? Are they at this time a majority? Are they any considerable part of the dissenting ministers, who have qualified under the 1st of William and Mary? Every dissenting minister hath now the alternative of qualifying, either by subscribing the doctrinal articles, or by a declaration, which, by the 19th of his present Majesty, is accepted instead of subscription: but the Calvinist, even of the puritanical cast, holds himself bound to an open declaration of his faith; except in that extraordinary case, when the interference of the magistrate, makes it a duty to disown his usurped authority, by refusing to confess with the mouth what the heart believes: every true Calvinist therefore, will now qualify under the old Act of Toleration; and if they are but an inconsiderable part of the dissenting ministry, who have qualified in this manner, it is but too plain, that Calvinism, among the dissenters, is almost extinguished. Inconsiderable, however, as I fear their numbers are, the Calvinists, for the soundness of their faith, are the most respectable part of our modern dissenters; and though few, in comparison with the general mixed body of the Rationalists, I hope they are more numerous than the proper Unitarians.

6. So much for the principal facts which I engaged to establish: it may, perhaps, be expected, that I

should take some notice of another, in which I have been charged with misrepresentation. Dr Priestley, in his First Letters to me, expressed high resentment, at the use which I had made in my Charge, of the word *conventicle;* as descriptive of meetings in which he, and friends of his, preside. To inform myself how far this resentment might be well founded, and for no other purpose, I searched the registers of certain courts, for such an entry of the house in Essex-Street, and for a record of such declarations on the part of the minister, as, by the 19th of his present Majesty, are requisite to make a meeting upon the pretence of divine worship, not a conventicle in the strict sense of the word: I told Dr Priestley, that I had found neither entry of the house, nor record of the minister's declaration: Dr Priestley replies, that I could, indeed, find no record of declaration; for none was ever made: but that I ought to have found an entry of the house; for the entry was duly made. Now the truth is, that I employed the clerks at the different offices to make the search, for which I paid the accustomed fee—I trusted to their report, which I find was not accurate—I believe the fact to be, as Dr Priestley states it: the house is entered; but the minister hath never declared his principles, as the law requires. The defence of a strong word, which hath been taken personally, would be to me the most unpleasant part of the controversy, were it not that the style of Dr Priestley's Second Letters, and of some other publications upon that side, hath put an end to all ceremony between me and the leaders of the Unitarian party; I therefore still insist, that all meetings, under ministers who have not declared, whether the place of meeting be entered or be not entered, are illegal;

and that the word *conventicle*, as it was used by me in my Charge, was not misapplied.*

N. B. The preceding chapter gave occasion to a pamphlet, entitled, *The Calvinism of the Protestant Dissenter's asserted: in a Letter to the Archdeacon of St Alban's.* By Samuel Palmer, *Pastor of the Independent Congregation at Hackney.* London, Printed for J. Buckland, &c. 1786.

The sum of Mr Palmer's argument, is contained, I think, in these three propositions. That of the thirteen ministers, who signed the protest against the resolution for the application to Parliament, six were Scotsmen, true members of the Kirk, and therefore not properly among our English dissenters: that the cross petition was not presented by the thirteen; that the fifty who signed it were chiefly lay-preachers, not belonging to the body of the London ministers; Methodists; unacquainted with the fundamental principles of the Protestant dissenters. That a great body of Calvinists concurred in the application to Parliament, upon a general principle of Liberty, disliking any interference of the magistrate in religious matters.

Of these three propositions, the two first seem to mili-

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* Dr Priestley, in his Third Letters, insists that his own meeting-house, and Mr Lindsey's, cannot be brought under the denomination of *conventicles*, merely because they, who preach in them, are not authorized by law. He thinks, "that if, by any accident, an unauthorized dissenting minister, like himself, should preach in *a parish church*, it would not on that account become a *conventicle*." But whatever he may think, an assembly in a parish church to hear Dr Priestley preach, or even to assist at divine worship, performed by a priest of the church of England, otherwise than according to the form prescribed by the Book of Common Prayer, would be a *conventicle*; and all persons resorting to it, would be liable to the penalties which the laws denounce, against persons frequenting conventicles.

tate strongly on my side, heightening the appearance at least of a paucity of Calvinists among our dissenters, since six of the thirteen who protested, and all the fifty who petitioned, according to Mr Palmer, were not English dissenters: as for the third, if the fact be as Mr Palmer states it, I can only lament that a republican principle, should so strongly have infected so respectable a branch of the Christian church, as the Calvinists are in my estimation. I believe however, that the truth is, and is pretty notorious, that Calvinism is gone among the dissenters of the present times; though, for what reason I presume not to say, the dissenting teachers dislike to be told of its extinction.

CHAPTER FIFTH.

Of the doctrine of Calvin.—Of Methodists.

I NOW proceed to reply to Dr Priestley's insinuation, that I have spoken with contempt of the doctrines of Calvin, which at the same time he presumes, I really believe.* He was in good humour with me, when he drew up this concluding paragraph of his third letter; for his reason for presuming that I believe what, he imagines, I speak of with contempt, is, that he is unwilling "to tax me with insincerity."†

2. If any where, I seem to speak with contempt of the doctrines of Calvin, I have certainly been unfortunate in the choice of my expressions; it is one thing not to assent to doctrines in their full extent, quite another to despise them: I am very sensible, that our articles affirm certain things, which we hold in common with the Calvinists:—so, they affirm many things which we hold in common with the Lutherans; and some things, which we hold in common with the Romanists. It cannot well be otherwise; for as there are certain principles which are common to all Protestants, so the essential articles of faith are common to all Christians: perhaps, in points of mere doctrine, the language of our

* Second Letters, p. 35. † Ibid.

articles agrees more nearly with the Calvinistick, than with any other Protestant confession, except the Lutheran; but I never was aware, till Dr Priestley informed me of it, that I am obliged, by my subscription to the thirty-nine articles, to believe *every* tenet that is generally known by the name of Calvinistick:* and, till the obligation is enforced upon me by some higher authority than his, I shall, in these matters, "stand fast in my liberty:" nevertheless, I hold the memory of Calvin in high veneration; his works have a place in my library; and, in the study of the holy Scriptures, he is one of the commentators whom I frequently consult: I may appeal to my own congregation at Newington, and to other congregations to which, by my situation, I am occasionally called to preach, to witness for me, that I never mention the Calvinistick divines without respect; even when I express, what I often express, a dissent, upon particular points, to their opinions. The respect with which they are mentioned in my Good-Friday sermon, in which I asserted the doctrines of Providence on the one hand, and of Free-agency on the other, is, perhaps in Dr Priestley's own recollection. In the passage to which he alludes, in my seventh letter to himself, he will find no contempt expressed of Calvinists, or of their opinions: the severity of the reflection falls on those, who have so speedily deserted a doctrine to which, for a long time, they were not without bigotry attached; while they not only maintained Calvin's tenets without exception, but seemed to think there could be no ortho-

* Second Letters p. 35.

doxy out of Calvinism: I consider it as the reproach of the dissenters of the present day, that a genuine Calvinist is hardly to be found; except in a sect, conspicuous only for the encouragement which the leaders of it seem to give to a disorderly fanaticism. The rational dissenter, hath nothing in common with the Calvinist, except it be an enmity to the episcopal establishment of this country; and this he hath not so much in common with the Calvinistick churches, as with his own ancestors, the factious Puritans.

3. It was, perhaps, an omission, that when the scarcity of Calvinists among the English dissenters was mentioned, a distinct exception was not made in favour of natives of Scotland, formed into Calvinistick congregations, under respectable pastors of their own country, and of the true Calvinistick persuasion, here in London, and perhaps in other parts of England: but I consider these as no part of our English dissenters: they are members of another national establishment; who, residing here, may think that a conformity with the church of England, might be interpreted as a desertion of their own communion: the rational dissenter, may take no credit to himself for their adherence to their old principles; nor are they involved in the reproach of his degeneracy.

4. While I thus repel my adversary's slanderous insinuation of contempt, expressed by me of Calvin's doctrines, the reflection, I doubt not, is arising in his breast, and with much secret satisfaction he says within himself, "He is making his peace, I see, with the Calvinists; but how will he get over my remark, upon the disrespectful language in which he has spoken of the Me-

thodists, his brother churchmen?"* To the burden of that crime, my shoulders, I trust, are not unequal: what if I frame my reply in terms which Dr Priestley's late publication furnishes—that whenever occasions shall arise, which may make it my duty, as a minister of the gospel, to declare my sentiments, I shall not wait for Dr Priestley's leave to "express my contempt of what I think to be despicable, and my abhorrence of what I think to be shocking?"† The Methodist, I am sensible, professes much zeal for our common faith. Many of his follies, I am willing to believe, proceed more from an unhappy peculiarity of temperament, than from any thing amiss in the moral dispositions of his heart;—let him then renounce his fanatical attachment to self-constituted, uncommissioned, teachers: let him show his faith by his works; not the formal works of superstition and hypocrisy, but the true works of everlasting righteousness; the works of fair-dealing, charity, and continence: let him do this, and churchmen will turn to him, and call him brother.

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* Second Letters, p. 35. † Importance of Free Inquiry, p. 29.

CHAPTER SIXTH.

Of the general spirit of Dr Priestley's Controversial Writings.—Conclusion.

I HAVE replied more largely than I thought to do, to more than is deserving of reply, in Dr Priestley's Second Letters: but, as the controversy between him and the advocates of the Catholick faith, is now brought, by his own declarations, to a state resembling that of a war, in which no quarter is to be given or accepted; I think myself at liberty to strike at my enemy, without remorse, in whatever quarter I may perceive an opening; and I think myself called upon, by the present situation of the controversy, not to suppress the remarks, which have spontaneously arisen in my own mind, upon the perusal of his late writings. I fear he is too little read, but by his own party; and it is fit, that it should be generally known what spirit he is of.

2. He avows, indeed, with the greatest frankness, that the great object of his essays upon theological subjects is, to spread opinions among his countrymen, from the press and from his pulpit, which he flatters himself, must end in the total demolition of the polity of his country in the ecclesiastical branch; the only branch against which he thinks it prudent, as yet, to declare his antipathy. In his *View of the Principles and Conduct of the Protestant Dissenters, with respect to the*

Civil and Ecclesiastical Constitution of England, a pamphlet first published in the year 1769, after a picture, highly exaggerated I hope, of certain abuses among the clergy, which he refers to the principles of our hierarchy, but which, so far as they are real, are easily traced to very different causes; he, in the true spirit of patriotism, points out the remedy. His salutary advice is conveyed in the form of a prediction. He foretells, that in "some general convulsion of the state," such as he might hope our disputes with the American colonies, which were then visibly tending to an open rupture, might in no long time produce, "some bold hand, secretly impelled by a vengeful providence, shall sweep down the whole together."* In later publications, he discovers no aversion to be himself the hand employed in that vindictive business; although his indiscretion which he avows, and which seems indeed to be very great, when the glorious prospect of state convulsions warms and elevates his patriotick mind, should render him, it may be thought, unfit to have a part in the execution of any project, in which the success may at all depend on secresy. In the dedication of his late *History of Corruptions* to Mr Lindsey, he tells his friend (what might be fitting for an associate's ear, but it is a strange thing to be mentioned in publick) "that while the attention of men in power, is engrossed by the difficulties which more immediately press upon them; the endeavours of the friends of reformation [that is, of those concealed instruments of vengeance on their devoted country], their endeavours in points of doctrine pass

* View of the Principles, &c. p. 12.

with *less notice*, and operate *without obstruction.*"* In his last publication, he has thrown out many acute remarks, upon the efficacy of "small changes in the political state of things, to overturn the best compacted establishments;"† upon the certainty, with which the exertions of himself and his associates operate, to the ruin of the ecclesiastical constitution; upon the violence with which, causes that lie dormant for a time at last act. "We," he says, "are, as it were, laying *gunpowder* grain by grain, under the old building of error and superstition, which a single spark may hereafter inflame, so as to produce an instantaneous explosion."‡ He shows, with great ability, that all measures of government, to support the ecclesiastical constitution, will be of no avail, if once a great majority of the people can be made its enemies.‖ And, for this good purpose, he declaims in his *conventicle*, to "enlighten the minds and excite the zeal"§ of the mechanicks of the populous town of Birmingham, with respect to the doctrines in dispute, between himself and the assertors of that faith, which the church of England holds in common with the first Christians. The avowal of these sentiments in himself, of hostility to the political constitution of his country; the attempt, to excite similar sentiments in the breasts of the "commonest people," in whose breasts they cannot be expected to lie inactive, quietly expecting the event of literary discussion; such avowal, and such attempts are more, I should think, than can be justified by the right of private judgment upon speculative ques-

* Dedication of History of Corruptions p. vii.
† Importance of Free Inquiry, p. 39.
‡ Ibid. p. 40. ‖ Ibid. p. 41—44. § Ibid. p. 29.

tions. Not that I would insinuate, that they, in any degree, deserve the attention of our governors; for I am well persuaded, that neither his doctrine nor his principles, are gaining that ground among the people, which he seems to imagine. I am inclined indeed to think, that the advancement even of his Unitarian doctrine is but slow, except in his own head; in which it seems to be making hasty strides. In his good wishes to the constitution, I think better of many of his Unitarian friends, than to believe that they concur with him: and while trade and manufactures flourish at Birmingham, we may safely trust to the inducements, which every man there will find to mind his own business, to defeat the success of Dr Priestley's endeavours to "enlighten and excite:" it seems therefore unnecessary at present, to think of "raising the dam or of making it stronger"—it will be the better policy of government, to let the brawling torrent pass. The attempt to provoke severities by audacious language, in order to raise a cry of persecution, if sedition, making religion its pretence, should meet with a premature check from the secular power, is a stale trick, by which the world is grown too wise to be taken in. If Dr Priestley ever should attempt to execute, the smallest part of what he would now be understood to threaten, it may then indeed be expedient, that the magistrate should show that he beareth not the sword in vain: but, whatever Dr Priestley may affect to think, of the intolerance of churchmen in general, and of the Archdeacon of St Alban's in particular, a churchman lives not in the present age so weak, who would not in policy, if not in love, discourage, rather than promote, any thing that might be called

a persecution of the Unitarian blasphemy, in the person of Dr Priestley, or of any of his admirers. A churchman lives not, so weak as not to know, that persecution is the hot-bed, in which nonsense and impiety have ever thrived: it is so friendly to the growth of religion, that it nourishes even the noxious weeds, which carry but a resemblance of the true plant in the external form. Let us trust, therefore, for the present, as we securely may, to the trade of the good town of Birmingham, and to the wise connivance of the magistrate, (who watches, no doubt, while he deems it politick to wink,) to nip Dr Priestley's goodly projects in the bud; which nothing would be so likely to ripen to a dangerous effect, as constraint excessively or unseasonably used. Thanks, however, are due to him, from all lovers of their country, for the mischief which he wants not the inclination to do, if he could find the means of doing it. In gratitude's estimation, the will is ever to be taken for the deed.

3. In his First Letters to me, and in former publications, Dr Priestley professed to disbelieve an inspiration of the apostles and evangelists, in any greater extent, than might be consistent with the liberty which he uses, of criticising their reasonings and their narrations. I had a hope, that denying, as he does, our Lord's divinity, he still admitted, in some figurative sense, that "all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily:" I had a hope, that he believed, at least, an unlimited inspiration (since he disbelieves any nearer communion with the Godhead) of him to whom "the Spirit was not given by measure." I perceived, with concern, by his late publication, that "the plenary inspiration of

Christ"* is to be disbelieved, no less than that of the apostles: the assertion, indeed, is qualified, by confining it to cases, "with respect to which, the object of their mission did not require inspiration"—the object of their mission required, that the first preachers of Christianity should be infallible, in whatever opinions they maintained, either about the nature of God, or the principles of his moral government; in whatever they taught, concerning the terms or the means of man's acceptance and salvation; and in the facts which they have related of the Redeemer's life. If in these things they were not infallible; if an appeal lies from their assertions, to any man's private opinions; who shall draw the line, where the truth of their preaching ends, and their error commences? If their inspiration was complete upon these subjects, it was to all intents and purposes *plenary:* If it gave them no light about the true system of the world, the circulation of the blood, or the properties of the Leyden Phial, it was not upon that account defective as a religious inspiration: the distinction, therefore, between a plenary inspiration, and an inspiration extending only to cases, in which the object of their mission required it, is vain and imaginary: and it is a mere pretence, to profess a belief in the one, when the other is openly denied.

4. In his First Letters to me, Dr Priestley disavowed his belief of the inspiration of the apostles as *writers* only.† Our blessed Lord left no writings. When, therefore, the fullness of his inspiration is denied, the denial must be understood of his inspiration as an oral teacher: Dr Priestley, therefore, must extend his dis-

* Importance of Free Inquiry, p. 35. † First Letters, p. 132.

belief of the inspiration of the apostles to their oral doctrine; unless he would be guilty of the folly of setting the disciple above his Lord.

5. It is some time since it was told me, that an admirer of Dr Priestley's tenets, in conversation with a divine of the church of England, high in station and in learning, had maintained, that our dying Lord's promise to the thief, that he should be with our Lord that day in Paradise, was founded on a mistaken notion of him who gave it, about the state of the dead: Dr Priestley's disciples well know, that the thief at this time is no-where, and will not be in Paradise before the resurrection. The leader of a party, is not answerable for the absurdities of all his followers: I was unwilling, therefore, to make the conclusion, that Dr Priestley himself ever would maintain, what he now maintains, the fallibility of Christ! I shudder, while I relate these extravagancies, though it be only to expose them.

6. Dr Priestley hath given free scope to the powers of his eloquence, upon the subject of my pretended injustice to illustrious characters, living and dead: if injustice may be committed, by praise bestowed where it is unmerited, no less than by censure injuriously applied, Dr Priestley may find it more difficult than I have done, to refute the accusation. A character now lives, not without its eminence, nor, I hope, without its moral worth, which Dr Priestley seems to hold in excessive admiration, and upon which he is too apt to be lavish of his praise. Few, who are acquainted with his writings, will be at a loss to guess that the character I speak of is—HIMSELF. As the analyzer of elastick fluids, he will be long remembered: but he sometimes seems to claim respect as a GOOD CHRISTIAN, and a GOOD SUBJECT. If, upon any branch of Christian

duty, my conscience be at perfect ease, the precept, "Judge not," is that which, I trust, I have not transgressed: the motives by which one man is impelled, are, for the most part, so imperfectly known to any other, that it seems to me cruel to suppose, that the evil which appears in men's actions, is always answered by an equal malignity in their minds: I have ever, therefore, held it dangerous and uncharitable, to reason from the actions of men to their principles; and, from my youth up, have been averse to censorious judgment: but when men declare their motives and their principles, it were folly to affect to judge them more favourably than they judge themselves. I shall, therefore, not hesitate to say, that after a denial of our Lord's divinity, his pre-existence, and the virtue of his atonement; after a denial, at last, of our Lord's plenary inspiration; after a declaration of implacable enmity to the constitution under which he lives, under which he enjoys the license of saying what he lists, in a degree in which it never was enjoyed, by the first citizens of the freest democracies; the goodness of his Christianity, and his merit as a subject, are topicks, upon which it may be indiscreet, for the encomiast of Dr Priestley to enlarge.

7. For eighteen months, or more, it hath been the boast of the Unitarian party, that the Archdeacon of St Alban's hath been challenged to establish facts which he had averred; that he hath been insulted in his character, as a scholar and a man; charged with ignorance, misrepresentation, defamation and calumny;* and that under all this, he hath continued speechless.† He hath at last spoken, in a tone, which, per-

* Second Letters, &c. Preface, p. xviii. p. 1, 39, 47, 160, 161, 163, 208, *et alibi passim.*

† See Animadversions on Mr White, p. 84.

haps, will little endear him to the Unitarian zealots. It matters not. The time seems yet so distant, when the train which they are laying, may be expected to explode, that the danger is exceedingly small, that he will ever be reduced to the alternative of renouncing his faith, or relinquishing his preferments; or, to the harder alternative which Dr Priestley seems to threaten,* "of a prison, with a good conscience, or his present emoluments without one." If those happy times, of which Dr Priestley prophecies, should overtake him ere his course is finished, when an Arian or Socinian parliament † shall undertake the blessed business of a second reformation, and depose archbishops from their thrones and archdeacons from *their couches of preferment*, he humbly hopes, that he may be supplied with fortitude to act the part, which may not disgrace his present professions. The probability, however, seems to be, that ere those times arrive, (if they arrive at all, which we trust they will not,) my antagonist and I shall both be gone, to those unseen abodes, where the din of controversy and the din of war, are equally unheard. There we shall rest together, till the last trumpet summon us to stand before our God and King. That whatever of intemperate wrath and carnal anger, hath mixed itself, on either side, with the zeal with which we have pursued our fierce contention, may then be forgiven to us both, is a prayer which I breathe from the bottom of my soul; and to which my antagonist, if he hath any part in the spirit of a Christian, upon his bended knees will say, AMEN.

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* Second Letters, p. 88. † Ibid. p. 87.

SUPPLEMENTAL

DISQUISITIONS

UPON

CERTAIN POINTS

IN

DR PRIESTLEY'S

SECOND AND THIRD LETTERS

TO THE

ARCHDEACON OF ST ALBAN'S,

BY

SAMUEL,

LORD BISHOP OF ST DAVID'S.

DISQUISITIONS.

DISQUISITION FIRST.

Of the phrase of "coming in the flesh," as used by St Polycarp in his epistle to the Philippians.

DR PRIESTLEY, in the fifth of his Second Letters to me, to prove that the phrase of "coming in the flesh" asserts nothing more than our Lord's manhood, without any reference to a prior state of existence, alleges, that the phrase is so used by St Polycarp, the disciple of St John, in his epistle to the Philippians. The passage in which Dr Priestley imagines that he hath found this use of the phrase, stands thus in Archbishop Wake's translation, from which Dr Priestley makes his quotation:

"Whosoever does not confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, he is antichrist; and whosoever does not confess his suffering upon the cross, is from the Devil; and whosoever perverts the oracles of the Lord to his own lusts, and says that there shall be neither any resurrection nor judgment, he is the first-born of Satan."

By an argument, the force of which will, I believe, be perceived by few but his Unitarian brethren, Dr

Priestley persuades himself, that the blessed martyr, in this passage, is not describing three different sects, but that "he alludes to no more than one and the same kind of persons, by all the three characters," *i. e.* by the denial of our Lord's coming in the flesh, the denial of his sufferings, and the denial of the general resurrection and the future judgment.

Hence he would infer, that the phrase of "coming in the flesh" predicates the manhood of our Lord, and nothing more; as I conceive for this reason: (for he hath not stated his argument very clearly.) The denial of our Lord's coming in the flesh, must be something that might consist with the denial of his sufferings; since the two errors (by Dr Priestley's hypothesis) were found in the same persons. They who denied the reality of our Lord's sufferings, denied his manhood; and in that sense they might, and they did, deny his coming in the flesh: but his divinity they denied not; on the contrary, they strenuously asserted a nature in him, superior at least, to the human. Any allusion, therefore, which may be supposed in the phrase of his "coming in the flesh," to an original nature in him more than human, they denied not. His manhood therefore, which is all that they who are charged with a denial of his "coming in the flesh" denied, is all that the phrase imports.

This is the very most that I can make of my adversary's argument: and in this state of it, (if I have misrepresented it, I most seriously declare it is without design) I confess myself too dull to perceive the connexion of the premises and the conclusion. We of the orthodox persuasion, conceive that the phrase of "coming in the flesh" expresses the INCARNATION; that is to

say, it contains this complex proposition, that a Being originally divine assumed the human nature. This complex proposition, they who denied the reality of our Lord's sufferings, denied; not in that part which affirms his divinity, but in that part which affirms his assumption of the manhood; and the denial of this, was the foundation of their error about the sufferings on the cross. These three characters of error, therefore, mentioned by St Polycarp, might belong to one and the same sort of persons, as Dr Priestley supposes that they did, and yet the phrase of "coming in the flesh" in its natural sense may, for any thing that appears from St Polycarp's own words, allude not to the manhood simply, but to the Catholick doctrine of the incarnation.

It must be observed however, and the fact is too well known to the learned in ecclesiastical history to require proof, that a great variety of sects, differing from each other in the wild and impious opinions which they severally maintained, were comprised under the general name of GNOSTICKS: to say, therefore, that the one and same kind of persons, alluded to by St Polycarp under all these three different characters, was the Gnosticks, is to say, that this one and same kind of persons, was many different kinds: of the various sects that went under this common name, the Docetæ, who denied our Lord's genuine manhood, were one general branch,—itself subdivided, if I mistake not, into many distinct denominations; the Cerinthians, who denied his original divinity, were another: both these equally, though in different ways, denied the proposition that "Jesus Christ was come in the flesh," in the sense in which the orthodox understand it; and I confess I am

not sure, though Dr Priestley says we are sure of it, that the denial of the resurrection was not to be found in a third class, distinct from either of these two, and from every branch of the Gnosticks. The two ancient hereticks mentioned by St Paul, (2 Tim. ii. 17, 18,) who said that the resurrection was past, and in that assertion, as St Chrysostom observes, denied a resurrection to come and the general judgment, are not numbered, by the writers of antiquity, among the Gnostick teachers:—(See Dr Whitby's note upon 2 Tim. ii. 17, 18.) The future judgment, was more explicitly denied by these than by the Gnosticks, who only denied the resuscitation of the body; and I think it not unlikely, that they might be the persons to whom St Polycarp, in his third character of damnable heresy, alludes: be that as it may, it seems clear to me, that St Polycarp, in the passage alleged by Dr Priestley, describes three different sets of people; and I should paraphrase the whole passage thus:

"Whoever confesses not that Jesus Christ, the ever blessed and only begotten Son of God, the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, the eternal Word by whom he made the worlds, is come in the flesh; he is antichrist: and if any one, pretending to confess this, shall yet deny the reality of his sufferings, in his own proper and entire person, on the cross; he also, notwithstanding he confess the truth in the former article, is of the Devil. Again, if any one, confessing both our Lord's coming in the flesh, and his sufferings and death, shall however pervert the oracles of God, accommodating the divine doctrine to his own prejudices and conceits, and say that there shall be neither resurrection nor judgment; this man, notwith-

standing his confession of our Lord's incarnation and passion, is the first-born of Satan."

But whether St Polycarp, in this passage, describe three different sort of hereticks, or one sort by three characters, it is not very material to dispute: the blessed martyr is not enumerating sects, as an ecclesiastical historian; but, as a preacher of the truth, he is warning the faithful against errors: he mentions three; any one of which would avail, in his judgment, to the perdition of him who should maintain it—for I contend, that nothing in the words of St Polycarp himself, nor any known and admitted fact in the history of the heresies of his times, makes it necessary to apply the description in the whole to one sect, rather than in the parts of it to three: I contend, that the coming of our Lord in the flesh, his passion, and the general resurrection, are three distinct things: the two first, for any thing that appears from St Polycarp's words, as distinct from each other, as either is from the third; so distinct therefore from each other, that a person admitting the one, might possibly not confess the other: I contend therefore, that for any thing that appears from the words of St Polycarp, a person, confessing that our Lord came in the flesh, might still deny his sufferings: the phrase, therefore, of "coming in the flesh," for any thing that appears from St Polycarp's own words, may denote something more than our Lord's mere manhood: and I contend yet further, that although it could be proved, that St Polycarp alludes to one sect, so that the coming in the flesh must necessarily be so understood, that the denial of that coming, and the denial of the sufferings, should be consistent errors; still, it will not follow that the coming in the flesh, must be understood as descriptive simply of

the manhood. If any one sect indeed singly be described, the Docetæ must be that one, since their characteristick error makes an explicit part of the description. But with their error, the denial of the incarnation was perfectly consistent: Dr Priestley thinks, that St Polycarp condemns the Docetæ, because they admitted not that Christ was a mere man: but if I say that St Polycarp condemns them, not for maintaining that he was more than man, but for denying that, being more than man, being indeed God, he was made man; and that for this reason he made choice of the phrase of "coming in the flesh," that he might not seem to condemn more of their doctrine than he really disapproved. What is there in St Polycarp's words to prove, that I, rather than Dr Priestley, misinterpret?

It may seem, that if, for any thing that appears from the writer's words, the phrase may be interpreted in either sense, the true inference is, that it is ambiguous: this conclusion indeed follows, with respect to the use of the phrase in this particular passage; and it is upon this very ground, that I maintain the total insignificance of the passage to decide the matter in dispute. In the fourth of my letters in reply to Dr Priestley, I have considered the natural and internal force of this phrase of "coming in the flesh;" I have shown, that it contains such evident allusion to a prior condition of the person who came, and to the power that he had of coming in various other ways, had it pleased him otherwise to come; that if the sacred writers really meant to affirm, that our Lord was a mere man, and nothing more, no reason can be devised, why they should make choice of such uncouth, mysterious words, for the enunciation of so simple a proposition, which they might

easily have stated in plain terms, incapable of misconstruction. Dr Priestley appeals from this reasoning of mine upon the natural sense of the words, to the usage of writers; which indeed, when it is clear and constant, must be allowed to outweigh all reasoning from general principles, because the particular sense of a phrase is a question about a fact; and in all such questions, external evidence, when it can be had, must overpower theory: to prove that the usage of the writers of antiquity, settles the sense of the phrase in his favour, he alleges this passage of St Polycarp's epistle, as an instance "that might satisfy me:" but I say, that no one who thinks the meaning of the phrase dubious, will be satisfied by this instance: for, not to insist that the usage of writers is very insufficiently proved by a single instance, I maintain, that if the phrase in question were in itself equally capable of the two senses, the low sense to which the Unitarians would confine it, and the sublimer sense in which it is generally understood, it certainly might be taken in either in this passage of St Polycarp; and that, in whatever light the passage be considered, whether as descriptive of three sects, as I believe it to be, or of one only, as Dr Priestley understands it. This passage, therefore, is of no significance in the argument; since no passage can be alleged, as an instance of any particular use of any phrase, in which various senses of the phrase may equally suit the purpose of the writer.

To this neutral passage of St Polycarp, I have on my side to oppose a very decisive passage of St Barnabas; in which the allusion to a prior condition of our Lord, which I contend to be the natural import

of the phrase, is manifest; and is so necessary to the writer's purpose, that if the phrase be understood without such allusion, the whole sentence is nonsense. "For if he had not *come in the flesh*, how should we mortals, seeing him, have been preserved, when they who behold the sun, which is to perish and is the work of his hands, are unable to look directly against its rays?" Let Dr Priestley find a passage, in which the allusion to our Lord's original glory, is as necessarily excluded from the import of the phrase, as it is included in it in this passage of St Barnabas: and even then, the only just inference will be, that the phrase is used variously, in a more restrained or larger signification, as may suit the particular occasion on which it is introduced; but that in its full and natural import, it affirms the incarnation.

But in truth, Dr Priestley seems to deal by St Polycarp as by St John; by the disciple as by the master: devoted himself to the Unitarian doctrine, he takes it with him as a principle in the study of St Polycarp, as of the New Testament, that the creed of St Polycarp, as of all the primitive Christians, was Unitarian: then, whatever expressions occur, alluding to opinions of a different cast, he interprets in the sense in which he and his Unitarian brethren would use them: from these expressions, so interpreted, he goes back to his original prejudice, that St Polycarp held and taught an Unitarian creed, as to a conclusion which he hath drawn, and can teach others to draw from St Polycarp's own writings. Alas! the sum of all such reasonings is no more than this: I Joseph Priestley am an Unitarian; therefore such was Polycarp—and the basis of this argument is, the supposed infallibility of Joseph Priestley.

DISQUISITION SECOND.

Of Tertullian's testimony against the Unitarians, and his use of the word IDIOTA.

DR PRIESTLEY has made it an occason of great triumph to himself and to his party, that he has caught me tripping, as he thinks, in my Greek and Latin, in the translation which I have given, in the ninth of my Letters in Reply, of a certain passage in Tertullian's book against Praxeas, which is produced by him as an acknowledgment of Tertullian, that the Unitarians were in his time the majority of Christians, and is represented by me as an assertion of the contrary. None but an idiot, as Dr Priestley conceives, in the learned languages, would imagine that the English word "idiot," which I have used in my translation of that passage, might in any sense render the ἰδιώτης of the Greek or the *Idiota* of the Latins, which is the name by which, with other adjuncts, Tertullian describes the Unitarians of his time. Dr Priestley says, in the nineteeth of his Second Letters, sec. 3. "What will be said of the man who can translate *Idiota*, idiot?" He hath now for some considerable time, been receiving the incense of his own applause, and the triumphant acclamations of his party, on the occasion of this victory gained over his daring adversary, on the very ground, on which the enemy had taken his stand with particular security. But it will be time enough to bind the laurel on their chief-

tain's spear, when they are sure he is in possession of the field.

In the seventh of his Second Letters, Dr Priestley says to me, "I will venture to say, that it properly signifies [the word *Idiota* in Latin, or ἰδιώτης in Greek properly signifies] an unlearned man, or a person who has not had a liberal education:" this Dr Priestley ventures to affirm, and this I venture to deny. The word ἰδιώτης hath ten distinct senses; which I shall recite in order.

I. *A private person; i. e.* a person in private life, in opposition to a person in publick office or employment, civil or military. In this sense the word is chiefly used by orators and historians, and by all writers who treat of popular subjects; and this is its first and proper sense, as it is of all its senses, the most immediately connected with the sense of the adjective ἴδιος, from which the substantive ἰδιώτης is immediately derived.

II. *A person in low life, one of the common people,* in opposition to persons of condition. This is nothing more than an extension of the former sense; private life in the extreme becoming obscure and low.

III. *A laick,* as distinguished from a clerk. This sense the Greek fathers easily grafted upon the first; the church being considered as a polity of its own kind, in which the clergy bear the publick offices, the laity are citizens in private life. In a sense nearly allied to this, the word seems to be used by St Paul, 1 Cor. xiv. 16, to denote a private member of a congregation, as distinguished from the minister.

IV. *A person unskilled in any particular science or art,* in opposition to the professors of it. The word,

thus used, rather expresses the want of professional skill than of ordinary knowledge—in this sense, the word is sometimes constructed by the Attick writers with a genitive of the thing, and by ordinary writers with an accusative, either with or without a preposition. ἀδεινος ἰδιώτην ἰητα. Plat. in Tim. ἰδιώτης ἰητε, καλα ἰητε, or ὡς προς ἰητο.

V. *A person deficient in any particular talent, habit, or accomplishment.* In this sense the word is sometimes constructed with a dative of the thing. ἰδιώτης τω λογω, 2 Cor. xi. 16. In this sense the word is used by St Paul, 1 Cor. xiv. 23, 24, to denote a common Christian, not endowed with any of the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit, as distinguished from persons so gifted.

VI. *A person generally unlearned;* one who has not had a learned and liberal education. In this sense, in conjunction with the epithet ἀγραμματοι, the word is applied to the apostles by the rulers of the Jews. Acts iv. 13.

VII. The plural, ἰδιωται, signifies *individuals;* citizens, individually considered, as distinguished from the collective body, the state.

VIII. The plural ἰδιωται, is a collective name for the illiterate vulgar, in particular reference to their general want of accomplishment in literature, the sciences and the arts. Ο πολυς ὁμιλος, ὡς ἰδιωτας οἱ σοφοι καλουσι. Lucian.

IX. Hence among philosophers and sophists, and pretenders to that sort of taste which is now called *virtu*, it became a name of reproach which they gave to those whom they thought disgracefully deficient in those accomplishments, which they valued and admired

in themselves. Thus the great Roman peculator, seeking to hide his avarice under a mask of affected taste for the works of the Greek masters, reproached his accusers with idiotcy in this sense of the word. *Erat apud Heium sacrarium——perantiquum, in quo signa pulcherrima quatuor——quæ non modo istum, hominem ingeniosum et intelligentem, verum etiam quemvis nostrum, quos iste* idiotas *appellat, delectare possent.* Cic. in Verrem. Act. 2. lib. iv. c. 2.

X. And because the faculties are apt to be dull, when they have not been sharpened by exercise upon any subject whatsoever, ἰδιῶται, from its use in the sense of illiterate and uncultivated, comes to be an opprobrious name for the *dull* and *stupid*, without any reference to the want of education as the cause of the stupidity. It never indeed, as far as I know, refers to that constitutional defect of the faculty of reason, which is the peculiar sense of the corresponding word of our language in our statutes and law books; but it denotes, the goodly qualities of stupidity and ignorance in the gross, like our vernacular words, *dunce, booby,* and their synonymes.

That this last is the sense in which it is used by Tertullian, in the passage in question, is sufficiently evident from the very structure of the sentence: Whoever knows the force of the phrase, *pœne dixerim,* which is probably as little understood by Dr Priestley as St Jerome's *quid dicam;* but whoever knows the true force of this phrase, will allow, that the epithets *imprudentes* and *idiotæ,* which are introduced by it, must contain some high intension and aggravation of the qualities, whatever they may be, which are contained in the notion of the preceding adjective, *simplices;* an

aggravation in such degree, that the writer thinks it necessary to apologize, for the strength and severity of the terms which he finds himself obliged to employ. This is the force of the phrase *pœne dixerim:* to take away what may seem too much in the terms which a writer is about to employ, when he fears they may seem excessive, notwithstanding that they are the lowest which will convey his full meaning, and do justice to his argument. The *imprudentes* therefore of Tertullian, are a sort of people in discernment and information many degrees below his *simplices;* and his *idiotæ* are still below his *imprudentes.* All this is evident, to those who have any real knowledge of the Latin language, from the bare structure of the sentence, whatever the proper use of each of the three words may be, among the polite writers of the Augustan age. As equivalent to the Latin *idiotæ,* as it is used by Tertullian in this passage, I employed our English word *idiots:* I employed the English word, to express that extreme degree of ignorance and stupidity, for which our language furnishes no other word sufficiently contemptuous, of which Tertullian affirms the Unitarians of his day, like their younger brethren in our own, exhibited a notable example. It was little to be apprehended, that even Unitarian prejudice, would render any one so much an idiot in style and phraseology, as not to perceive, that I used not the word in what in English is its forensick sense, especially when, in an exposition of the passage, which at the distance of a few lines follows my translation, I explain it by the words "dull," and "persons of mean attainments."

Dr Priestley asks me, in the seventh of his Second Letters, "Pray, Sir, in what lexicon or dictionary, or

dinary or extraordinary, did you find this sense of the term *idiota* in Latin, or Ἰδιώτης, in Greek?" Dr Priestley is venturesome in propounding questions like this, and seems to be one of those, whom repeated miscarriages cannot render wary and discreet: I certainly consulted no lexicon, for the purpose of making my translation of that plain passage of Tertullian; and it is within these very few days, that I have taken the trouble to consult lexicons, in order to discover what ground my adversary may have found in their defects, for the confidence which the question bespeaks: I will now refer him to certain lexicons, never known perhaps in the academy at Warrington, but such as a late Greek professor there might occasionally have condescended to consult, with advantage to himself and to his pupils. The first is that old glossary, which was found annexed to some copies of St Cyril, and is published by Henry Stephens, in the appendix to his Greek Thesaurus. In this glossary, the word Ἰδιώτης is expounded by ἀμαθεῖς, words which express not the want of education, but dullness of the natural faculties. The second is Robert Stephen's *Dictionarium Latino-Gallicum*, in which the word *idiota* is rendered *Ung lourdault, qui n'est pas des plus fins du monde, qui n'ha pas grand esprit, Idiot.* The third is the learned Calepini's *Dictionarium Octolingue*, in which the author gives the French words *lourdaut, sot, ignorant*, and the English words, *an idiot, a fool*, as rendering the Latin *idiota*. The fourth is the Thesaurus of our learned countryman Cooper, in which *idiota* is thus expounded: *One that is not very fine-witted; an idiot.* If my adversary demand the authority of an ordinary dictionary, I will refer him to a very ordinary dictionary indeed; to a dictionary in every

school-boy's hand. Let him turn to the word *idiota* in Ainsworth; he will find among its first senses, *an idiot.*

I abide therefore by my assertion, that this passage of Tertullian, which Dr Priestley mistakes for a testimony of the popularity of his favourite opinions in Tertullian's time, is no such testimony, but a charge of ignorance against his party; of such ignorance, as would invalidate the plea of numbers, if that plea could be set up.

And that this is the true representation of Tertullian's meaning, may be proved, without insisting upon any particular force of the word *idiotæ*, from the necessary indisputable sense of the adverb *semper*, which extends Tertullian's proposition, concerning the majority of believers, from his own time in particular, to all time: he says not what were or what were not, the prevailing opinions of his own times; but he says, that those persons who come under the characters of *simplices, imprudentes*, and *idiotæ*, that is, according to Dr Priestley's own translation, (which yet I admit not otherwise than *disputandi gratia*, for I have still "the assurance" to call my own an exact translation) but according to Dr Priestley's own translation, Tertullian says, that persons who come under the character of "the simple, the ignorant, and the unlearned," whatever their opinions at one time or another may be, are, in all times, the greater part of believers; as indeed they must be of every society collected indiscriminately, as the church is, from all ranks of men. Tertullian alleges, that persons of that description, in his time, meaning to assert what they little understood, the Divine Monarchy, were startled at the doctrine of the Trinity, which they as little understood.

This is the only sense in which Tertullian's words can be taken, unless some Unitarian adventurer in criticism shall be able to prove, that the adverb *semper* is equivalent to *nunc*, expressive of present time exclusively.

Dr Priestley "wonders at my assurance" in another circumstance; namely, that I should limit, as he says, what Tertullian affirms, as he would have him understood, of the whole body of the *simplices* and *idiotæ* to some of them. In this limitation, he says, I am altogether unwarranted. But when Tertullian says, that simple persons and *idiotæ* are startled at the economy, the natural sense of the words is, that this scruple was incident chiefly to persons of that description; not that it was to be found in the whole body of the common people: he insinuates, that persons of that weak character *only* were liable to that alarm—had he meant to speak of the whole body of the common people, he must have used phrases of another cast, as *vulgus indoctum*, or *genus hominum simplex:* Dr Priestley's complaint against me, might have seemed to have some foundation, had the word "some" been prefixed to "simple persons" in my translation—but it only appears in an exposition of the passage, which follows the translation; and surely, having translated the passage exactly, I took no unwarrantable liberty in adding an explanation of the author's sense (or of what I take to be his sense) in my own words. Had Dr Priestley's loose expositions of the passages in ancient writers, which he cites, been always accompanied with exact translations, the world would have had less reason to stand aghast at his assurance and ill-dissembled management. But to what purpose can it be, to hold an argument with a

man, who is too hasty to distinguish between what professes to be paraphrase, and what pretends to be exact translation; who has the vanity to play the critick in languages, to the idioms of which he is a stranger; and the audacity to challenge the production of authorities, without taking the pains to inform himself, in which scale the weight of authority may preponderate? "Pray, Sir, in what lexicon or dictionary, ordinary or extraordinary, do you find *idiota* in Latin, or ἰδιώτης in Greek, rendered *idiot?*" Vide Glossarium Vetus, R. Steph. Calepin. Cooper, Ainsworth.

DISQUISITION THIRD.

On what is found relating to the Ebionites in the writings of Irenæus, *in confutation of an argument advanced by Dr Priestley in favour of the Ebionites, in the third of his First, and the fourth of his Second Letters, from the writings of Irenæus in particular.*

THE particular argument in favour of the Ebionites, which Dr Priestley, in the third of his First Letters to me, attempted to draw from the writings of Irenæus, was so ably, though concisely answered in the Monthly Review for January 1784, by Mr Badcock, who, taking facts as Dr Priestley chose to state them, showed, even upon his own statement of the facts, the utter futility of his conclusion, inasmuch as the contrary conclusion might be drawn with equal probability from the same assumptions, that when I wrote my Letters in reply, I thought I might be excused if I passed by this argument without any other notice, than a slight reference to Mr Badcock's confutation. But in the sixth of his Second Letters, Dr Priestley hath attempted to refit this shattered piece of his artillery, and to bring it again into action.

He says to me, "It is truly remarkable, and may not have been observed by you, as indeed it was not by myself till very lately,"—(It had indeed been strange, if any sagacity of remark in me had outrun Dr Priestley's!)—"that Irenæus, who has written so large

a work on the subject of heresy, after the time of Justin, in a country where it is probable there were fewer Unitarians, again and again characterizes them in such a manner, as makes it evident, that even he did not consider any other persons as hereticks besides the Gnosticks. He expresses a great dislike of the Ebionites, but he never calls them hereticks."*

Freely I resign to Dr Priestley the honour of having been the first to made this remark; at least, I shall put in no claim for myself, or for my friends: if any plagiarism hath been committed, which I pretend not in this particular instance to assert, the depredation must have been made upon some of his own party: for I will venture to affirm, that the remark, so far as it extends to Irenæus's acquittal of the Ebionites from the imputation of heresy, could have occurred to none, that had not been in some good degree an IDIOT in the writings of Irenæus: it could have occurred to none, that had known more of the work of Irenæus, than is to be learned from an occasional reference to particular passages, by the help of an index.

The great object of Irenæus in his work against heresies, is, to assert the Scripture doctrines of the unity of God, and the incarnation of the Divine Word, in their original simplicity, against the numerous sectaries of his times, who, from various views and motives, had variously disfigured and disguised them. Some thought, that they gave a clear solution of the dark question about the origin of evil, when they maintained, that the world is the work of one or more intelligences, far inferior to the First Mind: some, to account for

* Second Letters p. 56.

some circumstances of contrariety, that may appear upon a superficial view of the Old and the New Testament, taught that the God of the Jews was a distinct being, from the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: some, to solve the difficulties in the great doctrine of the incarnation, indulged in a most criminal wantonness of speculation, concerning the person of Christ: some, affecting a deep mysterious wisdom, endeavoured to explain, in obscure and ill-imagined allegories, the procession of the different orders of intellect and life from the Divine Mind, and the production of the visible world: some, the most profane and hardened, artfully availed themselves of certain mysterious points of the Christian doctrine, to give personal consequence to themselves, and to gain credit among the vulgar to the most impious pretensions. To guard the faithful against these various seductions, and to establish them in the belief of the true Scripture doctrine of One God, absolute in power and in all perfection, who, by his Eternal Word, created all things in heaven and in earth, visible and invisible; and, having in time past spoken to the fathers by the prophets, hath spoken in the last days by his Son, the same Divine Word incarnate, and hath reconciled mankind to himself, through him, who, to effect this reconciliation, united the manhood to the Godhead in his own person,—to establish the faithful in this doctrine, Irenæus undertakes the confutation of those extravagant conceits, by which it is either contradicted, or perverted and disgraced, never losing sight of his two cardinal points, the unity of God, and the incarnation of the Word.

His whole work consists of five books: of these, the first is historical, exhibiting a general view of hereti-

cal opinions, in those points in which they differed most essentially from genuine Christianity; reciting the names of the principal hæresiarchs, describing their characters, and relating the varieties of opinion, by which the different sects were distinguished.

In the second book, the author professes to refute the extravagant opinions recited in the first, by general arguments, exposing the incoherence and intrinsick absurdity of each. In the third, he engages to bring a confutation of the same opinions from Scripture in general; in the fourth, from our Lord's own discourses in particular; in the fifth, from our Lord's own words, and the writings of St Paul.

In the first book, after a general recital of the principal extravagancies of the Valentinians, the author undertakes to show, that Simon Magus was the parent of all heresy, and that the distinguishing conceits of every sect, attached to one point or another of his doctrine: for this purpose, he gives a list of hæresiarchs and sects, from Simon Magus, in succession, to his own time, specifying the particular doctrines of each: in this list, the Ebionites have the honour to have the name of their sect, enrolled * between the Cerinthians and Nicolaitans. If Irenæus deemed them not hereticks, he has surely put them in bad company. At no great distance from the Ebionites, he introduces Marcion:† this Marcion was a most distinguished heretick, not only for the extravagance and impiety of his doctrine, but for the liberty which he took with the books of the New Testament, altering or expunging whatever he disliked, till he made the holy Scriptures, as he thought, speak his

* Lib. I. cap. xxvi. † Ibid xxix.

own sentiments. Irenæus promises a particular confutation of the opinions of Marcion, from the Scriptures, as Marcion himself received them: but notwithstanding this design, he found it necessary, he says, to mention him in this place, in order to make out his assertion, "that all who adulterated the truth, and impugned the publick doctrine of the church, were disciples of Simon, the Samaritan sorcerer;"* intimating, that having in his contemplation a particular work upon the heresy of Marcion, he would have omitted the mention of him in this place, but that the omission would have rendered the list of hæresiarchs, descending from Simon Magus, defective. Here then, we see both the author's attention to the accuracy of his list, and his own notion of what sort of persons they were who had a right to a place in it: the accuracy of his list, had certainly been as much vitiated by an improper insertion, as by an omission: where then is the probability, that an author, who declares he would have omitted Marcion, but from a scrupulous attention to the accuracy of his catalogue of hæresiarchs, in defiance of any such scruple, would have inserted the Ebionites, had not their notorious heresy, and their affinity with Simon Magus, given them an equal claim with Marcion, and with their next neighbours, the Cerinthians and Nicolaitans, to admission? Again, the author's notion of the sort of persons that were to be included in his list, namely, "adultera-

* Sed huic quidem——seorsum contradicemus; ex ejus scriptis arguentes eum, et ex iis sermonibus, qui apud eum observati sunt, Domini et Apostoli, quibus ipsè utitur, eversionem ejus facientes præstante Deo. Nunc autem necessario meminimus ejus, ut scires quoniam omnes, qui quoquo modo adulterant veritatem, et præconium Ecclesiæ lædunt, Simonis Samaritani Magi discipuli et successores sunt. Lib. I cap. xxix. et xxx.

tors of the truth, impugners of the publick doctrine of the church, and disciples of Simon the Samaritan sorcerer," clearly proves what the publick character of the Ebionites was, whom he hath enrolled among these worthies. To have registered among the sects, allied to Simon Magus, persons who lay under no publick imputation of heresy, however in his own private judgment he might see reason to reprobate their tenets, had been a very awkward proof of the general affinity between heresy and Simon Magus: to the proof of this, a consent or resemblance of opinion, between Simon Magus and those who were no hereticks, or not generally deemed such, could little contribute—it would rather indeed conduce to the acquittal of Simon, than the condemnation of an innocent sect said to resemble him; the Ebionites, therefore, having a place in this list, by which Simon is to be proved the common parent and founder of all heresies, unquestionably partook of that character, which Irenæus makes the peculiar mark of that family. They were adulterators of the truth, not barely of what was truth in the private judgment of Irenæus, but they were impugners of the publick doctrine of the church: if such persons were not hereticks, I have yet to learn the meaning of the name.

I am well aware, that a laudable concern for the reputation of his ancestors, will incline Dr Priestley to put the question, in what circumstance the Ebionites resembled Simon Magus? Some resemblance, he will say, according to Irenæus's notions, was necessary to constitute a heresy: for if all hereticks resembled Simon Magus in some circumstance or another, they who resembled him in none, were no hereticks.

To this it may be answered, that Epiphanius, when

he tells us that Ebion's Judaism was of the *Samaritan* cast, says what may be thought to imply a resemblance, in many circumstances, between this sect and the Samaritan sorcerer: but the principle in which Irenæus, I doubt not, placed the resemblance, was no other than the cardinal doctrine of the Ebionites, of the mere humanity of our Lord. This, as it was taught by the Cerinthians and the first Ebionites, was indeed nothing more than a refinement upon the older error of the Docetæ, of which Simon was the first teacher. The Docetæ, thinking it beneath the dignity of a celestial being to undergo the life of a man, and to submit to a violent and painful death, maintained, that the body of Jesus was a mere illusion, and the whole scene of his sufferings phantastick: or, if any of them admitted the reality of the sufferings, they denied, however, that Jesus was the sufferer. The Cerinthians, whose doctrines the first Ebionites followed in what related to the person of our Lord, thought it more reasonable to admit that Jesus was a real man, the subject of real sufferings: they maintained, that he was a mere man; and they supposed a superangelick being, which they called the Christ, to have been through life the guide and guardian of the man; something more perhaps than a Socratick demon, but yet distinct from the man, and exempt from all participation of his sufferings. This is evidently a refinement upon the doctrine of the Docetæ. Both doctrines had a common object,—to give the doctrine of the incarnation such a turn, that a divine or superangelick nature, might not be involved in the miseries of mortality: for this purpose, the Docetæ denied the reality of the manhood; and the Ebionites, with the Cerinthians, maintained a separate personality, and distinct conditions of

the man and the superior being: thus the affinity between the Ebionites and the Simonians is manifest; and the derivation of the one from the other, easy and natural: and I cannot but remark, that as the ancient Ebionæan doctrine passes by a single step, the dismission of the superangelick being, into the modern Unitarian, that too is traced to its source in the chimeras of the Samaritan sorcerer: and thus, both the Ebionites of antiquity, and the Unitarians of our own time, are in truth branches, or the offspring at least, of Gnosticism—and in this extended meaning of the word I am ready to allow, that Irenæus knew of no hereticks, but what are included under the general name of Gnosticks. Be that as it may, I maintain, that the first book of Irenæus, by the enrolment therein made of the Ebionites, in a list, in which the author had done disservice to his own argument, had he inserted any but known hereticks; affords a clear argument, that the Ebionites were hereticks in the judgment of the church, in the time of Irenæus.

In the second book of Irenæus, no mention of the Ebionites occurs, either by name or by description; nor is this, indeed, the place where any mention of that sect might be expected: the argument of the second book, is a confutation of heretical opinions from principles of mere reason; from general views of their intrinsick absurdity and incoherence: but the error of the Ebionites, is not of the number of those that may be so confuted; the great mystery of godliness, the incarnation of the Divine Word, was no discovery of natural reason. Reason, therefore, whose natural powers, upon this subject, gave no knowledge of the truth, is insufficient, without the aid of revelation, to the refutation of the

contrary falsehood: the conviction of the Ebionites, must rest entirely upon holy writ.

Accordingly, in the third book, in which the confutation is drawn from Scripture, the Ebionites are thus mentioned: "They again who say, that he was merely a man engendered of Joseph, die; continuing in the bondage of the former disobedience, having to the last no conjunction with the word of God the Father, nor receiving freedom through the Son, according to that saying of his own, *If the Son give you manumission, ye shall be free indeed.* But not knowing him, who is the Emmanuel of the Virgin, they are deprived of his gift, which is eternal life: and not receiving the incorruptible word, they continue in the mortal flesh, and are liable to the natural debt of death, not accepting the antidote of life."*

That the Ebionites are the persons intended in this passage, we need not be solicitous to prove, since a part of the passage is cited by Dr Priestley himself, in the appendix of his First Letters, as unquestionably relating to that sect. In this passage, their error and their crime is placed in their assertion, that our Lord was a mere man, the son of Joseph: this error, is called a rejection of the incorruptible word, a refusal of the antidote of life: these are phrases, evidently descriptive of a hardened infidelity, which listens not, with a due sub-

* Rursus autem qui nude tantum hominem eum dicunt ex Joseph generatum, perseverantes in servitute pristinæ inobedientæ moriuntur, nondum commixti verbo Dei Patris, neque per Filium percipientes libertatem, quemadmodum ipse ait; *si Filius vos manumiserit, vere liberi eritis.* Ignorantes autem eum qui ex Virgine est Emmanuel, privantur munere ejus, quod est vita æterna: non recipientes autem verbum incorruptionis perseverant in carne mortali, et sunt debitores mortis, antidotum vitæ non accipientes. Lib. 3. cap. xxi.

mission of the understanding, to the evangelical doctrine. The Ebionites therefore, by their wicked doctrine of our Lord's mere humanity, seemed to Irenæus to be mere infidels; and in consequence of this infidelity, "to die in the bondage of the former disobedience, having to the last, no connexion with the word of God the Father, continuing in the mortal flesh, and liable to the natural debt of death." These expressions, describe the miserable condition of the unconverted and impenitent; who, notwithstanding what the Son of God hath done and suffered for those who will believe in him, remain obnoxious to the guilt and punishment of their own sins, as well as to all the dreadful consequences of the first transgression. Such, Irenæus deemed the dangerous situation of these infidel Ebionites: he says further, that for their ignorance of him who is the Emmanuel of the Virgin, and in consequence of the infidelity and impenitence of which that ignorance was, in his judgment, a sure symptom, "they are deprived of the gift of that Emmanuel, which gift is eternal life." To be deprived of that life eternal, which is the gift of the Emmanuel, is the same thing in the phraseology of the ancient writers, as to be under a sentence of eternal damnation: these Ebionites therefore, who said that our Lord was a mere man, convicted by that wicked assertion of an evil heart of impenitence and unbelief, in the opinion of Irenæus, lay under a sentence of eternal punishment, which nothing but a renunciation of their error, and a sincere repentance, might avert. Nothing can be clearer, than that, in this passage, they are taxed with infidelity and impenitence, and threatened with the doom which awaits such crimes: but Dr Priestley can find no such sentence of damnation in this passage, passed upon

the Ebionites. "Irenæus *must* have meant, not that the Ebionites in particular, but that mankind in general, could have had no resurrection, if the Ebionæan doctrine had been true."* That is, Irenæus, expressly speaking of the Ebionites in particular, *must* be understood of mankind in general: speaking of their particular punishment, he *must* be understood to speak of a general calamity. The ground of the necessity is obvious—in no other way of interpretation, can what Irenæus hath actually said of the Ebionites, be brought to agree with what Dr Priestley, for the interest of his cause, *must* wish he had said about them. The learned Feuardentius, who lived not to be enlightened by the new revelations of our modern Unitarians, and above all, by Dr Priestley's ingenious expositions of the Scriptures and the fathers, was blind to this necessity: "Irenæus contends in this chapter," says Feuardentius, "that they who make Christ the son of Joseph, attain neither remission of sins, nor the adoption of the sons of God, nor so much as the right of a blessed resurrection."†

In the fourth book, after a confutation of many heretical opinions, Irenæus lays down this maxim:‡ that the believer, who steadily adheres to the great principle of one God, who created all things by his word, and studies the Scriptures with the assistance of the presbyters of the church, who were in possession, as Irenæus says, of the doctrine of the apostles; will extricate him-

* First Letters, p. 118.

† Contendit autem hoc capite Irenæus, illos nec peccatorum remissionem, nec adoptionem filiorum Dei, imo nec jus beatæ resurrectionis assequi, qui Christum filium Joseph constituunt. *Feuardentius ad laudatum locum Irenæi.*

‡ Lib. 4. cap. liii.

self from the difficulties, which were the stumbling-blocks of hereticks: in particular, he will perceive the connexion and affinity between the Old Testament and the New, and will understand, that the same God was the author of both: "such a disciple," he says, "being truly spiritual, inasmuch as he receiveth the Spirit of God, who, under all the dispensations of God, was present with men, and announced the future, and showeth the present, and relateth the past; [such a spiritual disciple] judgeth all, but is judged himself of none."* *He judgeth all:* that is, he discerns in what point the error of any erroneous doctrine lies, and he can evince its inconsistence with the truth: but he himself, having the written word and the doctrine of the apostles for his guide, and enjoying the secret illumination of the Spirit, is inconfutable: Irenæus illustrates and amplifies this aphorism, by an application of it to different sects; showing how and upon what principles, the spiritual disciple will *judge them; i. e.* expose and refute their errors: this amplification of the general sentiment, makes a very long period, which some of the early editors (Grynæus I believe) hath broken into no less than nine chapters, prefixing to each a proper title. This spiritual disciple, Irenæus says, will judge the Gentiles,†—will judge the Jews,‡—will judge the Marcionites,‖—will judge the Valentinians.§—"He will also judge the vain babblings of wicked Gnosticks, showing them to be the

* Talis discipulus vere spiritalis, recipiens Spiritum Dei, qui ab initio, in universis dispositionibus Dei, affuit hominibus, et futura annuntiavit, et præsentia ostendit, et præterita enarrat, judicat quidem omnes, ipse autem à nemine judicatur. Lib. 4. cap. liii.

† Lib. 4. cap. liv. ‡ Cap. lv. ‖ Cap. lvii. § Cap. lviii.

disciples of Simon Magus.*—He will also judge the Ebionites: how can they be saved, unless he, who wrought their salvation upon earth, be God?"† Dr Priestley imagines, that Irenæus says of the Ebionites, that "God will judge them:"‡ this mistake, of putting God's judgment for the sound believer's judgment, is indeed of no importance in the argument; I mention it only as one instance, of that practice of which I accuse Dr Priestley, of taking short detached passages, in the sense which may first occur to him, without knowing, and without examining, with what they may be connected in the context of the author's discourse. *Talis discipulus vere spiritalis*, is the subject of the verb *Judicabit*, from the LIIId. chapter to the end of the LXIId: Irenæus says then, that the spiritual disciple "will judge the Ebionites:" and this is the principle upon which he will judge them, "that they could not be saved, unless he, who wrought their salvation upon earth, be God." But this, Dr Priestley says "is no sentence of damnation passed upon them in particular for holding their doctrine, but an argument used by him to refute them; and is the same as if he had said, mankind in general could not be saved, if Christ had not been God as well as man."‖ This shall be granted. What Irenæus says in the passage now under consideration, is nothing more than an argument for the refutation of the Ebionites; and the principle of this argument is rightly stated by Dr Priestley: but by whom is this

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* Judicabit autem et vaniloquia pravorum Gnosticorum, Simonis eos Magi discipulos ostendens. Cap. lviii.

† Judicabit autem et Ebionitas; quomodo possunt salvari, nisi Deus est qui salutem eorum super terram operatus est? Cap. lix.

‡ First Letters, p. 33. ‖ Ibid.

argument used? By Irenæus: not simply by Irenæus in his own person; it is the argument which Irenæus puts in the mouth of the spiritual disciple: the spiritual disciple—that is, every spiritual disciple, every sound believer is the person, who upon these principles, will confute the Ebionites: Irenæus therefore, distinguishing the Ebionites who are confuted, from every spiritual disciple who confutes, sets the former out of the society of spiritual disciples, of sound believers, and puts them in the class of those who are not spiritual; that is, of those who have not the spirit: for were they spiritual, they could not be the objects of the spiritual disciple's opposition and confutation; but the class of those, who are not spiritual, is the choice society of hereticks and infidels—for *he, who hath not the spirit of Christ, is none of his.* In this passage therefore, the Ebionites are clearly ranked with hereticks.

It deserves particular notice, that one circumstance in Irenæus's description of the spiritual disciple who judges these Ebionites, is, that "he is a follower of the publick doctrine of the church;"* whence it might seem no unnatural conclusion, if other proof of the thing were wanting, that the publick judgment of the church, no less than the sentiments of Irenæus, was against the Ebionites; that they were opposers of the publick doctrine, and of course, in the publick estimation, hereticks: but the same thing indeed, is sufficiently implied in the representation given them, as maintainers of an opinion which struck at the very root of the doctrine of redemption, and lay open to every sound believer's confutation.

* Si et scripturam diligenter legerit, apud eos qui in ecclesiâ sunt presbyteri, apud quos est apostolica doctrina. Cap. iii.

In the fifth book, the Ebionites are mentioned among hereticks whose doctrines fall all together, when the great scheme of man's redemption is rightly understood. "Our Lord, redeeming us by his own blood, and giving his own soul for our soul, and his body for our bodies; and pouring out the spirit of the Father for the adunion and communion of God with men, bringing God down to men by the spirit; and again, by his incarnation, raising man to God; and in his advent, actually and assuredly conferring on us incorruptibility, by communion with God; the doctrines of hereticks fall altogether; for they are vain, who say that his appearance was phantastick.—The Valentinians therefore are vain, who hold this doctrine,—the Ebionites also are vain, not receiving the union of God and man by faith, &c."*

The only use which Dr Priestley makes of this passage is, to take the clause relating to the Ebionites by itself, and to remark, that "the harshest epithet which Irenæus here applies to that sect, is that of *Vani;* which, considering the manner of the ancients, he says, is certainly very moderate:"† but however moderate he may think this epithet, had he attended to the context, he would have seen that it is the very same epithet, which Irenæus in this same place applies to the Docetæ, the Valentinians, and the most impious of the Gnosticks:

* Suo igitur sanguine redimente nos Domino, et dante animam suam pro nostrâ, anima, et carnem suam pro nostris carnibus, et effundente Spiritum Patris in adunitionem et communionem Dei et hominum, ad homines quidem deponente Deum per Spiritum, ad Deum autem rursus imponente hominem per suam incarnationem, et firme et vere in suo adventu donante nobis incorruptelam, per communionem quæ est ad Deum; perierunt omnes hæreticorum doctrinæ. Vani autem sunt qui putative dicunt eum apparuisse——Vani igitur qui a Valentino sunt, hoc dogmatizantes——Vani autem et Ebionæi, unitionem Dei et Hominus per fidem non recipientes in suam *animam.* Lib. 5. cap. i.

† First Letters, p. 33.

it should seem therefore, that it is a term of more severe reproach than Dr Priestley apprehends: it imports indeed, that they to whom it is applied, were persons *become vain in their imaginations;* cherishing opinions void of foundation in Scripture and in truth; such as arose out of a misapprehension of the whole scheme of revealed religion. And whatever the particular sense of this epithet may be, the manner in which the mention of the Ebionites is introduced, shows that they are mentioned, as affording one instance of hereticks of that description.

In another passage of this fifth book, Irenæus says of hereticks in general, that "they are unlearned; ignorant of the divine dispensations, particularly of the scheme respecting man; blind to the truth; and that they contradict their own salvation." This general charge, he illustrates and confirms, by specifying the particular absurdities of different sects; "Some," he says, "introducing another Father beside the Demiurgus: some again, saying that the world and the substance of it, were made by certain angels: some, that the substance of the world sprang up from itself, and is self-produced, far separate from him who, according to them is the Father: some, that it took its substance from corruption and ignorance, being among the things within the Father: some treat the doctrine of our Lord's visible advent with contempt, not admitting the incarnation: some, ignorant of the dispensation of the Virgin, say, that he was begotten by Joseph, Some, &c."*

* Indocti omnes hæretici, et ignorantes dispositiones Dei, et inscii ejus quæ est secundum hominem dispensationis, quippe cæcutientes circa veritatem, ipsi suæ contradicunt saluti, alii quidem alterum introducentes, præter Demiurgum patrem.

Dr Priestley "once thought"* that in this passage the Ebionites were included in the appellation of hereticks; as indeed any one would think, who could explain the grammatical construction of the sentence, in every clause of which *heretici* [hereticks] is understood as the substantive to be joined with *Alii* [some]: they therefore, who maintained that our Lord was literally and naturally Joseph's son, are here expressly called "Some hereticks:" but Dr Priestley has reconsidered the passage; and perceiving how strongly the natural sense of it makes against him, he has found himself mistaken in that construction of it: he says, "as Cerinthus and Carpocrates, and other Gnosticks, denied the miraculous conception as well as the Ebionites; and all the rest of this description, both before and after this circumstance, evidently belongs to the Gnosticks only; and as in no other place whatever, does he comprehend them in his definition of heresy; it is natural to conclude, that he had no view to the Ebionites even here, but only to those Gnosticks who, in common with them, denied the miraculous conception."† This conclusion might indeed be somewhat more natural than it is, if the passage really were, what Dr Priestley, when he calls it "this description," would represent it to be,—a description of one sect by various characters: for, in that case it might be said, that all the parts of the description must be united, to make up the complete char-

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Alii autem ab angelis quibusdam dicentes factum esse mundum, et substantiam ejus. Alii quidem porro et longe separatum ab eo, qui est secundum ipsos, patre, a semetipsa floruisse, et esse ex se natam Alii autem in his quæ continentur a patre, de labe et ignorantia substantiam habuisse. Alii autem manifestum adventum domini contemnunt, incartionem ejus non recipientes. Alii autem rursus ignorantes virginis dispensationem, ex Joseph dicunt eum generatum. Lib. 5. cap. xix.

* Second Letters, p. 57. † Ibid. p. 58.

acter of an heretick. But the passage is plainly an enumeration of different sects, to which the name of hereticks, and the charge of ignorance and blindness belong in common; an enumeration describing each by its particular error. This appears, not only from the grammatical structure of the period, in which the repetition of *Alii, Alii, Alii,* &c. *Some, Some, Some;* distinguishes and enumerates, and hath no other force; but still more evidently from this circumstance: that the opinions mentioned in the different clauses are, in some instances, manifestly repugnant; insomuch that they could not all be maintained by the same persons: thus the second, third, and fourth clauses, mention contradictory opinions about the origin of the visible world; and the "some hereticks" who held any one of these opinions, must have been a different set from the "some hereticks" who held another: and indeed that they were different, is clearly expressed in the Latin words; for I have been favourable to Dr Priestley, in rendering the repeated *Alii, Some,* and *Some,* and *some,:* the proper rendering would be, *Some, Others, Others,* &c. In this enumeration of heresies, the error ascribed to each, is alleged as an instance of the ignorance of that sect, of their blindness to the truth, and their opposition to their own salvation. The enumeration being made in proof of that general charge, it is natural to suppose, that each sect is described by that error, which, of all their absurd opinions, was the fittest for the purpose of that proof, the clearest instance of their ignorance and blindness, and their contradicting of their own salvation: the particular error therefore mentioned in each clause, is not indeed by itself a definition of heresy, but it is by itself a sure mark of a heretick; by which, every one main-

taining that opinion, might be known to come under that general character. One of these marks of a heretick, is the opinion, that our Lord was literally and naturally the son of Joseph: all therefore were hereticks in the judgment of Irenæus, upon whom that mark was to be found; whether they were Cerinthians, Carpocratians, or Ebionites—If this was a mark that might, in the judgment of Irenæus, convict a Carpocratian or Cerinthian, why should it not equally in his judgment, convict the Ebionites? because, in the Cerinthians and Carpocratians, Dr Priestley will say, this opinion was blended with impieties which were indeed heretical: But this is to place the mark of the heresy in the judgment of Irenæus, not in the circumstance which he expressly mentions as the mark, but in others which he suppresses: a mode of interpretation, by which every writer may be brought to say, whatever his expositor shall be pleased to say for him.

"If there be any other passage in Irenæus, in which he calls, or seems to call, the Ebionites hereticks,"* Dr Priestley declares he hath overlooked it: he hath then overlooked a very remarkable passage in the third book, the mention of which I have reserved for this place. Irenæus, speaking of the universal credit and authority of the gospels, says, that "even hereticks bear witness to it, since each of them endeavours to confirm his own doctrines by proofs from those writings: for the Ebionites, using only the gospel according to St Matthew, are by that convicted of error in their notions of our Lord: Marcion, cutting off much of the gospel according to St Luke, may be proved a blasphemer

* Second Letters p. 58.

against the only God, from the parts which he retains, &c."*

As Dr Priestley mentions a definition of heresy given by Irenæus, in terms which exclude, or at least comprehend not the Ebionites,† I shall just take the liberty to suggest, that he might confer an obligation upon the learned world, if he would be pleased to give information, in what part of the whole work of Irenæus that definition may be found.

Meanwhile it appears, that the Ebionites are repeatedly mentioned by Irenæus, and never mentioned but as hereticks: when any heavy charge against hereticks is to be confirmed by particular instances, the Ebionites seldom are forgotten: in the first book, they appear in a list of heretical sects, as one instance among many, confirming the author's general assertion, that all the heretical sects of his own and the preceding age, had their root and origin in the doctrines of Simon Magus: in the third book, they are mentioned as one instance of hereticks, who, rejecting the greater part of the four gospels, contribute to the general evidence of the authenticity and credit of those writings, by their solicitude to build their particular opinions upon the parts which they receive, and yet are convicted of error in those opinions by those very parts to which they appeal. In another passage of the third book, they are described as persons in a

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* Tanta est autem circa evangelia hæc firmitas, ut et ipsi hæretici testimonium reddant eis, et ex ipsis egrediens unus quisque eorum conetur suam confirmare doctrinam. Ebionæi etenim, eo evangelio quod est secundum Matthæum solo utentes, ex illo ipso convincuntur non recte præsumentes de domino. Marcion autem id quod est secundum Lucam circumcidens, ex his quæ adhuc servantur penes eum, blasphemus in solum existentem Deum ostenditur. Lib. 3. cap. xi.

† Second Letters, p. 58.

state of impenitence and hardened infidelity, lying under the dreadful sentence of eternal damnation: in the fourth book their sect is mentioned among those, whom the spiritual disciple, *i. e* the sound believer, will judge: in the fifth book, they are mentioned among hereticks whose doctrines are demolished all in the lump, and at one blow, by being contrasted with the scheme of man's redemption truly stated: and in another passage of the same book, their distinguishing tenet of the mere humanity of our Lord, is alleged as an instance of the ignorance and blindness of hereticks, and of the forwardness of such persons to oppose their own salvation.

Of the truth of that remark of Dr Priestley's which provoked this long disquisition, that the Ebionites in Irenæus's large work "are again and again characterized by him, in such a manner as makes it evident, that even he did not consider them as hereticks, and that he never calls them by that name; of the truth of this remark, and of the qualifications of the man who could make it, and take credit to himself that he had been the first to make it, to enlighten the age upon points of ecclesiastical antiquity; let the intelligent reader now form his own judgment.

DISQUISITION FOURTH.

Of the sentiments of the fathers and others, concerning the eternal origination of the Son, in the necessary energies of the paternal intellect.

IN a subject so far above the comprehension of the human mind, as the doctrine of the Trinity must be confessed to be in all its branches, extreme caution should be used, to keep the doctrine itself, as it is delivered in God's word, distinct from every thing that hath been devised by man, or that may even occur to a man's own thoughts to illustrate it, or explain its difficulties. Every one who hath ever thought for any length of time upon the subject, cannot but fall insensibly and involuntarily upon some way or other, of representing the thing to his own mind: and if a man be ever so much upon his guard, to check the licentiousness of imagination, and bridle an irreverent curiosity upon this holy subject; yet, if he read what others have written, orthodox or hereticks, he will find opinions proposed with too much freedom upon the difficulties of the subject; and among different opinions, he cannot but form some judgment, of the different degrees of probability with which they are severally accompanied; nor can he so far command himself, as not in some measure to embrace the opinion which seems the most probable. In this manner, every one who meddles at all with the subject, will be apt to form a solution for himself, of what seem to him the

principal difficulties: but since it must be confessed, that the human mind in these inquiries, is groping in the dark every step that she ventures to advance, beyond the point to which the clear light of revelation reaches; the probability is, that all these private solutions are in different ways and in different degrees, but all in some way and in some degree erroneous; and it will rarely happen, that the solution invented by one man, will suit the conceptions of another. It were therefore to be wished, that in treating this mysterious subject, men would not in their zeal to illustrate what, after their utmost efforts, must remain in some parts incomprehensible, be too forward to mix their private opinions with the publick doctrine. Many curious questions were moved, by the hereticks of antiquity, and are now revived by Dr Priestley, about the nature and the limit of the Divine generation: why the Father generates but one Son? Why that Son generates not another? Why the generation is not infinite?—Instead of answering such questions, it seems to me that, except when the necessity may arise, as indeed it too often will, of "answering a fool according to his folly," it should be a point of conscience with every writer to keep any particular opinions he may have formed, as much as possible out of sight, that divine truth may not be debased with a mixture of the alloy of human error, and that controversies may not be raised upon points, in which no man or set of men can be authorized or qualified, to prescribe to the belief of others. Upon these principles, I should wish to decline all dispute upon the metaphysical difficulties of the subject, even with an adversary better qualified than I take Dr Priestley to be for such discussions: I should think indeed, that I had already

been guilty of an indiscretion, in the avowal that I have made in my Charge,* of my own opinion about the manner in which the Son's eternal existence, without any diminution of its own necessity, may be connected with the Father's, were it not, that what I am there attempting to illustrate, is not so much the Scripture doctrine itself, as the manner in which that doctrine was understood by the Platonizing fathers.

I said, and I still say, that it was their common principle, "that the existence of the Son flows necessarily from the Divine Intellect exerted on itself:† I showed how the Son's eternity will follow from this principle; and I discovered, what indeed I might have concealed, that I myself concur in this principle with the Platonists; for I said, that "it seems to me to be founded in Scripture"‡—by which I meant not to assert, that it is so expressly declared in Scripture, that I would undertake to prove it by the Scriptures to others, in the same manner that I would undertake to prove that the world was created by Jesus Christ; or that the one, like the other, ought to be made a branch of the publick confession of the church; or that the belief or disbelief of this particular principle, is a circumstance that may in the least affect the integrity of any Christian's faith; it was not alleged as a principle, on which I meant at all to rest the credit of the Scripture doctrine; it was mentioned only as a principle which, true or false, was embraced by a certain set of writers, and serves to explain certain things said by them, which without it are unintelligible, or at least liable to misinterpretation. At the same time, I discovered my own opinion about this prin-

* Charge IV. sect. 5. † Ibid. ‡ Ibid.

ciple, that I think it true, or likely to be true; for it *seems* (that is the word I used) to be founded in Scripture: many phrases of holy writ seem to me to allude to it; and to those who first thought of it, I doubt not, but that the same allusions seemed couched in the same phrases: yet I will not undertake to teach every one, to read the same sense in the same expressions. When I showed, that from this principle once admitted, a strict demonstration might be drawn of the eternity of the second person, it was not that I set any value upon that demonstration, as adding in the least degree to the certainty of the Scripture doctrine—upon such points, the evidence of Holy Scripture is, indeed, the only thing that amounts to proof: the utmost that reasoning can do, is to lead to the discovery, and, by God's grace, to the humble acknowledgment of the weakness and insufficiency of reason; to resist her encroachments upon the province of faith; to silence her objections and cast down imaginations, and prevent the innovations and refinements of philosophy and vain deceit. Had philosophical reasoning, upon points of express revelation, been held as cheap by Dr Priestley as it is by me, the present controversy never had arisen: but this demonstration of the Son's eternity was produced, for no other purpose, but to show the disagreement beetween the immediate consequences of the principle, from which it was deduced, and certain notions which Dr Priestley would ascribe to those who held that principle: but Dr Priestley, mistaking for an illustration of Scripture, what is only an illustration of writers whose meaning had been perverted by him, conceiving that the whole Catholick doctrine of the Trinity would be confuted, if a certain principle, which, being admitted, might

furnish a demonstrative proof of a particular part of it, might be shown to be without foundation, calls upon me in the seventh of his First Letters,* to "show what it is in the Scriptures, or indeed in the fathers, that gives any countenance to that curious piece of reasoning." In another part of the same letter he tells me, that "in reading my attempt to explain the doctrine of the Trinity [so he calls it], he fancies himself got back to the darkest of the dark ages, or at least, that he is reading Peter Lombard, Thomas Aquinas, or Duns Scotus."† In his Second Letters, waxing confident by my neglect, which he interpreted as a cowardly desertion of my argument, he is louder in his challenge, and more stout in his defiance: upon every occasion of these *challenges* and *calls*, of which sometimes the Dean of Canterbury, sometimes Dr White, sometimes Bishop Prettyman, sometimes I myself have the honour to be the object,—upon every such occasion, but particularly on this, his tone reminds me of the strutting actor on the stage:

> Clifford of Cumberland, 'tis Warwick calls,
> And if thou dost not hide thee from the bear,
> Now, when the angry trumpet sounds alarum;
> Clifford, I say, come forth and fight with me.
> Proud Northern Lord ——————
> Warwick is hoarse with calling thee to arms.

"I challenge him," he says, "to produce any authority whatever, ancient or modern, for that opinion of the origin of the Son from the Father's contemplation of his own perfections."‡ In another place, he speaks of it as "my own peculiar notion." He expresses "great mortification," that in my Letters in Reply to his First

* First Letters, p. 78. † Ibid. p. 99. ‡ Second Letters, p. 34.

Letters, "he found not one gleam more of light on this curious subject."* He reminds me of his most magnanimous "CHALLENGE to produce any authority for it, except what may exist in my own imagination."† He makes no doubt but that, had it been possible for me to give an answer, I should have answered.‡

As for the question about the opinion itself, how far it may be reasonable or unreasonable, how far the allusion to it may be real or imaginary, which I think I perceive in some scriptural phrases, no challenge of Dr Priestley's, no call, taunt, defiance, insult, will move me from my vow of silence. But upon the question of fact, concerning my own exclusive property in whatever there may be of truth or falsehood in the notion, I think myself more at liberty, and feel more stomach for the contest: I cannot indeed resist the temptation which Dr Priestley's challenge "to produce any authority whatever, ancient or modern," presents, to seize the occasion of strengthening the proof of my *main point*, by exhibiting in its true light an instance, which, more perhaps than any other singly taken, evinces Dr Priestley's ignorance of the religious opinions of every age, and shows how much the oldest things, to him, are novelties.

The fathers, it must be confessed, were in general very properly reserved and shy, when they were directly pressed with questions, about the manner in which the existence of the three Divine Persons is connected: at the same time, the analogy, which the Platonizing fathers in particular, suppose between the relation of the Father to his Word, and the relation of every

* Second Letters, p. 135. † Ibid. ‡ Ibid. p. 134.

man's mind to its own thoughts, so necessarily implies this principle concerning the Son's origination, that with this principle, as a key, what they say upon the subject is very intelligible; and without this key, impenetrably obscure: insomuch, that to me it is matter of astonishment, that any one can read some of the passages, which Dr Priestley himself hath produced from Athenagoras, Tatian, Tertullian, and others, and not perceive that this notion was common to all those writers, and is the principle upon which, all they have said upon the subject rests. But if the sentiments of the fathers upon this abstruse point, were not to be collected with certainty from the tenor of their reasoning, and from their language, St Basil and St Cyril are sufficiently explicit: St Basil, when he says that the Son of God is called the Λογος, "to show that he came forth from intellects:"* which he endeavours to illustrate by the example, so generally in use among the writers of antiquity, of the human mind producing an image of itself in its own thoughts. St Cyril, when he says, that "if any one would investigate the manner of that generation, he ought to consider the fructifications of intellect, and to endeavour rather to compare with them [than with physical propagations] the generation of the Word; and not to say, that God is less capable of generating than body, because he generates not in a corporeal way: that the human intellect generates good thoughts, must necessarily be confessed: if it be impious to suppose that the human intellect is unfruitful, how much more absurd to think, that the Supreme Intellect should

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* Διατι Λογος; ινα δειχθη, οτι εκ τȣ Νȣ προηλθε. Homil. in verba illa "In Principio erat verbum." Tom. i. p. 506.

be unproductive, and to deprive it of its proper fructification."* In these words, St Cyril evidently places the generative faculty (if the expression may be allowed) of the Divine nature, in the necessary fecundity of intelligence. In another part of the same discourse he says, that it is to be conceived, that "the Son is in such sort begotten of the Father, as wisdom of intellect."† And again, in another place, he illustrates the intimate union of the Father and the Son, by its analogy to the union between the human intellect, and its internal operations.‡

From the fathers, if we pass to the schoolmen, we shall find among them in this, as in most subjects, more philosophical subtlety, and much less of a laudable reserve. With them, the question was expressly agitated, whether the Divine generation was affected by intellect or by will: if by intellect, there arose a second question, from which they had not the modesty to abstain; what the object of the intellect might be; whether the Divine essence simply, as Scotus maintained, or the totality of the Divine nature, in the essence, the persons, and the works of creation—which was the notion of Thomas and his followers: and for this unbounded curiosity of speculation, they are justly censured by Simon Episcopius;|| whose censure is a testimony, which

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* Δια ταυτην οιμαι την αιτιαν χρηναι δειν τους οσοι την επ αυτου γεννησιν εξεταζειν βουλονται, τας εκ νου καρποφοριας ζητειν, και ταυταις μαλλον εξομοιουν επειγεσθαι του λογου την γεννησιν· και μη λεγειν σωματων αγονωτερον ειναι τον θεον, επει μη ως σωμα γεννα. Γενναν μεν γαρ και τον ανθρωπινον νουν παντως αν ομολογησαιμεν διαλογισμους αγαθους.—ει τοινυν ασεβες ειπειν τον ανθρωπινον νουν καρπον ουκ εχειν——πως ουκ αλοπον τον υπερ παντα νουν ακαρπον ειναι λεγειν, και της πρεπουσης αυτω καρποφοριας αποσερειν. Cyril in Thesauro. tom. v. p. 45. edit. Auberti.

† ——— Νοητεον ουτω γεγεννησθαι τον υιον εκ του πατρος, ως σοφιαν εκ νου. p. 48.

‡ Ει ο ανθρωπινος νους &c. p. 31.

|| Episcop. Inst. lib. iv. sec. 11. c. 33.

Dr Priestley perhaps will regard, that such opinions were maintained, and such questions agitated.

After the council of Trent, this peculiar notion of mine, this singular conceit, for which no authority whatever can be produced, ancient or modern, became the publick doctrine of the church of Rome, being expressly asserted in the rule of publick teaching, set forth by the authority of that council, for the assistance and direction of the parochial clergy, under the title of *Chatechismus ad Parochos*. The first part of that work, is an exposition of the apostles' creed: in the explanation of the first article, the comment upon the word "*patern*," is closed with an exhortation to the true believer, to pray without intermission, "that being at some time or other admitted into the eternal tabernacles, he may be thought worthy to be allowed to see what that wonderful fecundity of God the Father is, that *contemplating and exerting his intelligence upon himself*, he should beget a Son the exact counterpart and equal of himself."* In the exposition of the second article, upon the words "*Filium ejus unicum*," it is said, "That of all similitudes that are usually brought, to explain the manner and way of the eternal generation, that seems to come the nearest to the thing, which is taken from the reflection of our own mind; upon which account St John calls the Son the Word: for, as our mind, exercising its intelligence upon itself, forms as it were an image of itself, which divines have called its word; so God, so far as human things may be put in comparison with di-

* Oret sine intermissione—ut aliquando in æterna tabernacula receptus dignus sit qui videat, quæ tanta sit Dei Patris fœcunditas, ut *seipsum intuens atque intelligens* parem et æqualem sibi Filium gignat. Artic. Prim. sec. xiv.

vine, exercising intelligence upon himself, generates the eternal Word."*

This however, was not so peculiarly the doctrine of the Roman church, but that it had its advocates among the most eminent of the Protestant divines. Philip Melancthon, that great luminary of the reformation, was its constant and strenuous assertor; and he repeatedly resorts to it as a principle, for the explanation of the phraseology of Scripture. Philip Melancthon, a man with whom it were more honourable to err, than to be in the right with Socinus or Dr Priestley, thought as I think, that the notion was founded in holy writ: he thought it indeed so clearly implied in the Scripture phrases, that he was less scrupulous than I would be, in asserting it as a part of the Scripture doctrine.

In his Loci Theologici, he says, "the Son therefore is an image generated by the Father's *Thought*——— The eternal Father, *contemplating himself*, begets a thought of himself [or a conception of himself in his own thoughts] which is an image of himself never vanishing away, but subsisting, the essence being communicated to the image.———He is called the Word, because he is generated by thought. He is called the Image, because thought is an image of the thing thought upon."†

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* Ex omnibus autem, quæ ad indicandum modum rationemque æternæ generationis similitudines afferuntur, illa propius ad rem videtur accedere, quæ ab animi nostri cogitatione sumitur; quamobrem sanctus Joannes Filium ejus verbum appellat. Ut enim mens nostra, se ipsum quodam modo intelligens sui effingit imaginem, quam verbum Theologi dixerunt; ita Deus, quantum tamen divinis humana conferri possunt, *seipsum intelligens*, verbum æternum generat. Artic. Secund. sec. xv.

† Est igitur imago cogitatione Patris genita.———Pater æternus *sese intuens* gignit cogitationem sui, quæ est imago ipsius non evanescens, sed subsistens, com-

Let me by the way entreat the learned reader, to compare these sentences of Melancthon with Tertullian's fifth chapter against Praxeas, and judge for himself, whether Tertullian and Melancthon had not the same view of the subject.

Again, in the form of examination of candidates for holy orders, Melancthon says, "The eternal Son is the second person of the Divinity, which person is the substantial and entire image of the eternal Father, which the Father, *contemplating and considering himself*, generates from eternity."* The same thing is repeated nearly in the same words, in his definitions of appellations,† and again, in his second exposition of the Nicene creed.‡

In his first exposition of the Nicene creed, he says, "The eternal Father is a divine person, eternal, not sprung of any other, but *by thought upon himself* generating from eternity the coeternal Son, his own image. ———The Son is a divine person, begotten by the Father *thinking upon and contemplating himself.*"‖

In the second exposition, he says, "To be born, is of the intelligent power; because the Son is born by thought."§

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municatâ ipsi essentiâ.———Dicitur Λογος, quia cogitatione generatur. Dicitur imago, quia cogitatio est imago rei cogitatæ. Op. Melanct. tom. i. p. 152.

* Filius æternus est secunda persona divinitatis, quæ est substantialis et integra imago cæterni Patris, quam Pater *sese intuens et considerans* ab æterno gignit. Opera Melanct. tom. i. p. 307.

† Tom. i. p. 350. ‡ Tom. ii. p. 213, and p. 315.

‖ Pater æternus est persona divina, æterna, non nata aliunde, sed *cogitatione* qui gignens ab æterno Filium coæternum, imaginem suam.———Filius est persona divina genita à Patre cogitante ac intuente seipsum. Symp. Nicen. De Tribus personis.

§ Nasci est a potentiâ intelligente; quia Filius cogitatione nascitur. Tom. ii. p. 228.

In his annotations upon the gospel for the feast of the nativity he says, "Basil and others say, that the Son is called the Word, because he is the image of the Father, generated by the Father *thinking upon himself.* For the Father *contemplating himself*, generates a thought, which is called the Word; which thought is the image of the Father; into which image the Father, if we may so speak, transfuses his own essence."*

So possessed was Melancthon with this notion, which Dr Priestley, learned only in his own imaginations, conceives to have been first hatched in my brain, ages since the good Melancthon fell asleep, that upon every occasion, when he mentions the generation of the Son, he introduces this notion of the manner of it: and Melancthon, the learned reader will observe, never dreamed that in this he was setting up a notion of his own: he thought, as I do, that the fathers entertained the same view of the subject; and that this view of the subject, was countenanced by the phraseology of holy writ.

Zanchius, indeed, an orthodox writer of great piety and learning, speaks of this same notion in terms, as it may seem, of strong disapprobation: "What some, he says, as the schoolmen write, that God the Father, by seeing and considering himself, begot the Word, and that the emanation of the Son from the Father, is after the manner of an emanation of intellect, and other things of that kind, which have no proof from the word of God, we must reject them as rash and

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* Basilius et alii dicunt, Filium dici Λογον quia sit imago Patris, genita à Patre *sese cogitante.* Pater enim *intuens se*, gignit cogitationem, quæ vocatur verbum; quæ cogitatio est imago Patris, in quam imaginem Pater, ut ita dicamus, transfundit suam essentiam. Tom. iii. p. 12.

vain; that is to say, if the thing be positively asserted to be."* Zanchius therefore, were he now living to be a witness of this controversy between Dr Priestley and me, would have taxed me, it seems, with rashness and presumption, had he found me propounding this notion of the Divine generation, *as the way in which the thing must certainly be;* but he would have little admired my adversary's learning, or commended his modesty, when he upbraids me as a setter forth of new doctrines of my own coinage, and challenges me to produce any authority ancient or modern, in support of this opinion: Zanchius well knew, though the thing is unknown to Dr Priestley, that the authority of the schoolmen, and of others, is on the side of the opinion: and in the very censure which he passes upon the doctrine, he acquits all of his own, or later times, of the invention.

But in truth, this learned Calvinist seems to have thought no worse of this opinion, than I myself think of it,—that it is not a thing to be too positively asserted so to be. In itself, he seems to have thought it not improbable: for, in another part of his works, he mentions it as a notion, furnishing the best answer to those who would deny the Son's eternity, upon the principles so frequently alleged by the Arians and other Antitrinitarians, that that which is begotten, must always have a later beginning of its existence than that which begets; and that all generation is effected

* Cæterum quod quidam, ut scholastici, scribunt, Deum patrem se videndo et considerando gennisse Λογον, et quod emanatio Filii a Patre est secundum emanationem intellectus, et alia id genus, quæ nullum habent ex verbo Dei testimonium, rejicienda nobis sunt tanquam temeraria et vana; nempe si res ita sese habere asseveretur. Zanchius De Tribus Elohim. Lib. v. c. 8.

by motion and change. Such objections he says, may be answered by analogies taken from the material world: the sun at all times generates rays from his own body: these rays are emitted without any change in the sun himself—"But a clearer refutation," he says, "may be drawn from the example of our own incorporeal intellect.———Intellect, in the energy of intelligence generates another *quasi-intellect*, as the philosophers call it, like unto itself; which for this reason is called by us, a conception of the mind; by the Platonists, mind generated of mind; and by the fathers, the word and Λογος of the mind. And this it begetteth within itself. And there is no such thing as intellect actually intelligent, that is, which is truly intellect, without this other generated intellect; and the parent intellect generates, without suffering in itself any change."* Zanchius suggests these philosophical topicks of reply, to philosophical arguments against the eternity of God the Son. This analogy therefore, between the Father's generation of the Son, and the mind's generation of a conception of itself in thought, he esteemed an hypothesis philosophically probable; which might be very properly employed to convince those who, upon philosophical grounds, made a difficulty of the only begotten Son's eternity, that what they called in question might easily be, though he

* Clarius etiam hæc refutari possunt exemplo intellectus nostri incorporei.——Intellectus, dum intelligit, gignit (ut philosophi vocant) alium quasi intellectum, sibi similem, quem hanc ob causam nos conceptum mentis, Platonici mentem genitam a mente, Patres verbum et Λογον mentis appellarunt. Et illum gignit intra se; et nunquam intellectus est actu intelligens, et ideo vere intellectus, sine hoc genito altero intellectu: et quidem sine ulla sui mutatione gignit. Zanchius De Natura Dei. Lib. ii. c. 7.

thought it presumptuous in any one to assert too positively, that this analogy represents the way in which the thing actually is.

If the Calvinists have been shy of resorting, in their disputes with Antitrinitarians, to the arguments which Zanchius suggests and recommends, I take the reason of this to be, that the analogy on which those arguments were founded, seemed repugnant to an opinion which Calvin himself was thought to hold: Calvin, in the heat of his disputes with Valentinus Gentilis and Blandratta, was carried to the use of some unguarded expressions which seemed to imply, that the existence of the Son was entirely independent of the Father's: he went indeed, so far, as to question the propriety of the expression in the Nicene creed, "God of God." This notion was considered as a dangerous novelty, and gave much alarm to some of the most eminent divines of those times, as necessarily terminating in one or the other of two horrible extremes: Sabellianism on the one hand, or Tritheism on the other: it was treated with great severity by writers of the Roman church, and was strenuously opposed, though with much moderation and candour, by my illustrious predecessor Bishop Bull, among ourselves, and in Holland, by Arminius. Beza, in his preface to Athanasius's dialogues, makes the apology of Calvin; confessing that he had not been sufficiently circumspect in the choice of expressions, and alleging, that his expressions had been misunderstood; which I take indeed to be the truth. It seems to me, that Calvin meant only to deny that the Son was a contingent being, the creature of the Father's will; to assert that he is, strictly speaking, God; and that the existence of the three persons, of the second and third

no less than of the first, is contained in the very notion of a God, when that notion is accurately developed. However, his words were otherwise understood by many of his followers; his authority gave credit and currency to an error, which was supposed to be his doctrine, and the notion of the Son's origination in the necessary energies of the paternal intellect, is rejected by many of the Calvinists, more peremptorily than by Zanchius.

The church of England, with her usual caution, hath abstained from giving her sanction to any particular opinion, concerning the manner of the Divine generation. Of her divines, some have embraced the opinion which I have acknowledged for my own, (particularly Dr Leslie, in his *Socinian Controversy Discussed,*) and a great majority acknowledge a dependence of the Son's existence on the Father, strenuously asserting in the language of the Nicene creed, that the Son is "God of God." But some of no inconsiderable name, have adopted what was thought to be Calvin's doctrine, in an extent to which I think with Beza, Calvin himself never meant it should be carried.

Upon the whole, I trust it appears that this singular conceit of mine, this invention for which I am challenged to produce any authority ancient or modern, is a principle that was tacitly assumed by many of the fathers; openly maintained by some; disputed about by the schoolmen; approved by the church of Rome; maintained by the greatest of the Lutheran divines; objected to by the Calvinists as a point of doctrine, but received by some of the most learned of that persuasion, as at least a probable surmise. About the truth of the opinion, I have declared that I will not

dispute; and I shall keep my word: but Dr Priestley's rash defiance, I may place among the specimens with which his history and his letters to me abound, of his incompetency in this subject, and of the effrontery of that incurable ignorance, which is ignorant even of its own want of knowledge.

DISQUISITION FIFTH.

Of Origen's want of veracity.

THE defence of Origen's veracity, which Dr Priestley hath attempted to set up in the second of his Third Letters, is in some parts so weak, and in others so disingenuous, that it would deserve no serious reply, if the reader might be considered as a judge before whom Origen was arraigned, who would be obliged by his office to canvass the arguments, and weigh the evidence on both sides with a scrupulous attention, in order to a solemn condemnation or acquittal of the accused party: but it may be expected of a controversial writer, to save trouble to the reader, who is bound to no such official duty, to assist him in forming a final judgment upon the evidence produced on either side, and to expose the futility of arguments, and the fallacy of assertions, which, in a criminal process before any of his Majesty's judges of assize, might safely be trusted to expose themselves.

The work of Celsus against Christianity being lost, neither the plan nor the matter of it is otherwise to be known, than by what may be gathered from Origen's answer. It appears from Origen, that it was a composition of much art, and highly laboured: many of Celsus's objections were delivered in the person of a Jew, who is supposed to address his discourse, first to Jesus, and afterwards to the Hebrew Christians: in the

discourse addressed to the Hebrew Christians, Celsus makes his Jew upbraid them with a desertion of the Mosaick law: to this reproach, Origen, in vindication of the Hebrew brethren, gives a double answer, which I have shown to be inconsistent with itself in the two different branches:* first he asserts, that the Jews believing in Christ had not renounced their Judaism: upon occasion of this assertion, he goes into a discourse of some length, about St Peter's adherence to the Mosaick law, and the information which was conveyed to that apostle, in a vision concerning the extinction of its authority: from this discourse, he runs into a second upon a saying of our Lord's, which he expounds as an ænigmatical allusion to the intended abrogation of the law: and when, in this digressive way, he hath written "about it and about it," till he had himself forgotten, or might reasonably trust that his reader would have forgotten, the position with which this prolix discourse began, he enters upon the second branch of his defence of the Hebrew brethren, in which he flatly contradicts his first assertion, insulting over Celsus's ignorance, who had not made his Jew distinguish the different sects of the converted Hebrews,—two of which observed the law, and one of which had to all intents and purposes abandoned it. I have given this passage at length in my Remarks on Dr Priestley's Second Letters'† and shall not tire my reader's patience with a needless repetition of it.

Dr Priestley, to vindicate Origen from the charge of self-contradiction in this instance, hath recourse to a

* Remarks on Dr Priestley's Second Letters, P. II. chap. i. sect. 6.
† Ibid.

very curious piece of criticism. He bids me observe, that Origen contends not that Celsus's Jew, had he said what Origen says he should have said, would have said what was *true*, but what was *plausible*:* the same critical sagacity that struck out this distinction, might have perceived, that the want of plausibility with which Celsus's Jew is taxed, consisted in the confounding of distinctions which actually existed; and that the existing distinctions which Celsus's Jew confounded, were the distinctions between the Hebrew sects, two observing the law, and one disusing it: for this is the language of Origen's reproach—"How *confusedly* does Celsus's Jew speak, when he might have said, &c." and by saying so have avoided the imputation of confusion.

The plausibility, of the want of which Origen complains in the discourse of Celsus's Jew, is what may be called poetical plausibility: It is that general air of truth, which a writer of judgment and good taste, contrives to give to the fable of a drama, by an attention to the peculiarities of times, places, manners, and characters; a neglect of which, stamps a manifest character of clumsy fiction on what ought to seem reality; as would be the case in any serious play, in which the Maid of Orleans should be seated on the Delphick tripod, or Hugh Peters introduced, maintaining the divine rights of kings and bishops: this is the want of plausibility, with which Origen taxes Celsus; he says, that Celsus, with all his great pretensions to learning and taste, knew not the common rules of art about maintaining character in the fiction of persons: Το ἀκολουθον και' οἰδε

* Third Letters p. 10.

καϛατον τοπον της προσωποποιας. He made his Jew say what no real Jew would have said,—that the Hebrew Christians in general had deserted the law of their ancestors: this no Jew would have said, because it was a downright falsehood, which every Jew must have known to be such. Had Origen stopt short here, he would not have himself betrayed the want of truth in his first assertion, that the whole body of the Hebrew Christians retained the observation of the law: for the two propositions concerning the Hebrew Christians, that they had all forsaken their law, which was Celsus's Jew's assertion; and that none of them had forsaken it, which was Origen's; are so completely opposite, that the entire falsehood of the one, were perfectly consistent with the entire truth of the other: but Origen, unfortunately for his own credit, goes on to tell his reader what Celsus's Jew might have said with more plausibility, *i. e.* with more propriety of character—more consistently with a Jew's knowledge of the truth—that is, more truly: so that plausibility and truth, in this use of the word plausibility, are the very same thing. Had Celsus made his Jew reproach the Hebrew converts, not as he did, with a general desertion of their law, but with great disagreements among themselves about the extent and duration of its authority, and the respect due to it under the Christian dispensation; he would have made his Jew speak more in character, because he would have spoken more consistently, with what every Jew must have known to be the real state of opinions, among the Christians of the circumcision. Had Celsus's Jew talked like a Jew upon this subject, he would not have said, that all the Hebrew brethren were deserters of their law; but he might, it seems, with great propriety have

said, that some of them had forsaken it. This had been very consistent with that accurate information, which a Jew might be expected to possess; consequently, it appears that Origen should not have said that they all adhered to it; and his own representation of the fact, when he comes to state it accurately, betrays the falsehood of that first assertion.

That the distinctions which Origen says Celsus's Jew might have put between the Hebrew Christians, were differences really subsisting in that body at the time, is strongly implied in the form of the expression, δυναμενος ειπειν; the force of which is very imperfectly rendered in my translation of the passage, by the words "when he might have said"—it had been better rendered, "when he had it to say:" the Greek words δυναμενος ειπειν, like the English "he had it to say," are applicable only to substantial facts, which might safely be averred without danger of refutation.

Dr Priestley indeed seems willing to concede, that Origen, in this second branch of his reply to Celsus's Jew's reproach, "may allude to a few" of the Hebrew Christians, "who had abandoned their ancient customs;"* so that the question at last comes to this: how many of the Hebrew Christians had abandoned those customs? for that some had abandoned them, is at last confessed: These *some* were, by Origen's account, enough to be reckoned a sect: but Dr Priestley hath taken care, to settle the proportion to the advantage of his own argument. "There might be," he says, "a few Jewish Christians who had deserted their former customs, which would have given Celsus a *plausible*

* Third Letters, p. 10.

pretence for making such a division of them, as to make these one of the classes, yet the great body of them had not."* But there is nothing in Origen's expressions which should imply, that either of the two sects of the Hebrew Christians which retained the law, was a greater body than the sect which had abandoned it: *Some* and *Some* and *Some*, is the word by which the mention of each class is introduced; in what proportion the first "Some" might fall short of, or exceed the second or the third, it exceeds my skill in computation to investigate: Dr Priestley perhaps solved the problem, in that early period of his life, when he was addicted to mathematical pursuits.†

But I have maintained, that Origen, in the sentence which follows this division of the Hebrews professing Christianity into three classes, gives us to understand, that of these three sorts, they only who had laid aside the observation of the Mosaick law, were in his time considered as true Christians: for he mentions it, as a further proof of Celsus's ignorance, that in his account of the heresies of the Christian church, he had omitted *the Israelites believing in Jesus, and not laying aside the law of their ancestors:* I refer the reader to an exact translation of Origen's words, in my Remarks upon Dr Priestley's Second Letters.‡

Upon this, Dr Priestley says to me in the first of his third Letters, "From this construction of the passage, a person might be led to think, that Origen represented Celsus as having undertaken to give an account of the heresies in the Christian church, and as having in that account omitted the Israelites believing in Christ, and

* Second Letters, p. 191. † Ibid. ‡ P. II. chap. i. sect. 7.

not laying aside the rites of their ancestors; and upon no other ground can your insinuation stand."* On no other ground I declare, does my insinuation stand: but I am confident, that with the exception of Dr Priestley and his associates and admirers, every person who will take the trouble to consider the passage as it stands in Origen's discourse, will perceive that mine is the plain and natural construction of it: every unprejudiced person who can construct the passage for himself, will perceive, that Origen hath indeed thus represented Celsus, as pretending to give an account of the heresies among Christians, and in that account, inserting some who had not a right to be inserted, and omitting others who had: of Celsus's work, as hath been before remarked, we know not the contents, but so far as they may be gathed from Origen's reply: it should seem from this passage in Origen, that Celsus, in some part of his work, had found it to his purpose to enumerate the principal sects, of which he would have it believed the general body of the Christians was composed: it is not difficult to conceive, how it might be to his purpose to enumerate sects, and make as many of them as he could; he might intend by this, to throw discredit on Christians in general, as disagreeing among themselves, and broken into parties about the particulars of the revelations, which they professed in common to believe.—Origen says, that in the execution of this design, he numbered among the heresies of the church, impious sects, which were not to be deemed in any degree Christian, and passed unnoticed, or knew not of the real heresy of the Judaizing Hebrews: this is, in itself, a very just and perti-

* Third Letters p. 13.

nent objection to Celsus's enumeration; but then it is a confession, that the Judaizing Hebrews were an heretical sect, and of consequence, that Origen asserted what was false, when he said of the Hebrew Christians in general, that they Judaized; for that the great body of the Hebrew Christians was deemed heretical, is what I believe no adventurer in ecclesiastical history hath ever yet affirmed.

Another instance which I produced * of Origen's disposition to prevaricate, is his answer to Celsus's Jew's objection to the famous prophecy, of the miraculous conception contained in Isaiah vii. 14. Celsus's Jew maintains, that the Hebrew word in that text which the Christians, with the old Greek translators, understand to signify a virgin, properly renders, not the condition of virginity, but the season of youth; not a virgin, but a young woman: Origen, to prove on the contrary that this word properly renders a woman in the state of virginity, cites a text in Deuteronomy, where he would have it believed, that the word in question is clearly used in that sense: but, according to our modern copies of the Hebrew text, the words which correspond to the Greek παρθένος in the two passages in Isaiah and Deuteronomy, are two different words; and there is much reason to believe, as I have shown in my Remarks on Dr Priestley's Second Letters,† that the same two different words occurred in the two passages in the copies of Origen's time, and that Origen himself was apprised of the difference: the text in Deuteronomy therefore, as it stands in the modern Hebrew text, and as it probably stood in the more ancient copies, affords no illustration

* Remarks on Dr Priestley's Second Letters, P. II. chap. i. sec. 3.
† Ibid.

of Isaiah's words; and Origen's expressions give the greatest cause to suspect, that he well knew the infirmity of his own argument; and by consequence, that in the use of such an argument, he was guilty of prevarication.

Dr Priestley says to me, in the first of his Third Letters, "The question between Origen and the Jews, was not what was the word in the Hebrew, but what was the meaning of it in a particular place."* It is true: the main question between Origen and Celsus's Jew, was about the meaning of a word in a text; but then, the question was not indefinite about one or another of different words in different places: it was about a particular word in a particular place—about the meaning of the word עלמה in Isaiah vii. 14. This was indeed the question between Origen and Celsus's Jew; but the question between Dr Priestley and me is, by what sort of argument Origen attempted to sustain his own opinion, upon the matter in debate between him and the Jew? Whether, by such an argument as might have been employed by an honest disputant, who had preferred general truth to victory in a particular question. Origen, to justify the sense in which he understood the word, resorts to a critical argument: he appeals to a passage in Deuteronomy, in which he would have it believed, that the word was indisputably used, in the same sense in which he understood it to be used, in the text in question in Isaiah: now it is evident, that this critical argument, rests entirely upon the identity of the word in the two different texts; and Origen's good faith in the use of that argument, rests on his knowledge or belief of the identity: I remark, that Origen takes not

* Third Letters, p. 14.

upon him to affirm positively this identity of the word, upon which his whole argument depends, but speaks of it as from hearsay only :—I remark, that from the present state of the Hebrew text, there is great reason to think that this hearsay was a false report; for, in the text in Deuteronomy, we find not עלמה but בחולה : nor did Dr Kennicott find עלמה in the text cited by Origen from Deuteronomy, in any one of the innumerable copies which he collated. Now I say, that the confessed sense of the word בחולה in Deuteronomy, can never settle the disputed sense of the word עלמה in Isaiah: and I say, that the doubtful manner in which Origen speaks of the identity of the two words in Isaiah and Deuteronomy, creates a vehement suspicion, that the words were different in the copies of his time, as they are in those of the present day; and that Origen well knew, that his argument was founded on a misrepresentation of the text in Deuteronomy.*

Dr Priestley adds, "admitting that the dispute was about the true reading in the original, what great matter was there in Origen's saying *the Jews said so*, when he knew that what they said was true?"† Here again, we have a beautiful specimen, of our Greek professor's readiness in the Greek language: *The Jews said so!* Origen says nothing of what the Jews said: there is no mention of Jews, more than of Cherokees, except of Celsus's fictitious Jew, in this part of Origen's discourse. The nominative of the verb φασι is not *the Jews*, but the indefinite plural understood; which is usually expressed in the English language by the pro-

* Remarks on Dr Priestley's Second Letters, P. II. chap. i. sec. 8.
† Third Letters, p. 14.

noun *they* used indefinitely, and in the French by *on*; but in the Greek and the Latin languages, is always understood, never is expressed: ὡς φασι, *ut aiunt*. "As they say," *i. e.* "As is generally said." Origen affirms no, that what was generally said was true: that he should shelter himself under the authority of a vague report, in a point so essential to his argument, in which he was so competent to judge how the case really stood; is a strong presumption that he knew, not that this report was true, but that it was the reverse of truth: that it was the reverse of truth, is in the highest degree probable, from the present state of the Hebrew text: that Origen knew it to be the reverse is highly probable, from the suspicious manner in which he appeals to it: and, upon the ground of this strong presumptive evidence, my impeachment of his veracity in this instance stands.

Dr Priestley, in relating my remark upon Origen's critical argument, hath taken care to omit that very material part of it, that in our modern copies of the Hebrew Bible, the word which, by the consent of all interpreters, denotes a virgin in the text cited from Deuteronomy, is a different word from that which the LXX with great propriety render a virgin in Isaiah: this art, which Dr Priestley is so apt to employ, of reducing an argument which he would refute, by well-managed abridgments, to a form in which it may be capable of refutation, indicates so near a resemblance between the characters of Origen and his *Hyperaspistes* in the worst part of Origen's, that perhaps I might not be altogether unjustifiable, were I to apply to the Squire the words which Mosheim so freely uses of the Knight, EGO HUIC TESTI, ETIAMSI JURATO, QUI TAM MANIFESTO FUMOS VENDIT, ME NON CREDITURUM ESSE CONFIRMO.

DISQUISITION SIXTH.

Of St Jerome's orthodox Hebrew Christians.

IN the fourth of his Third Letters, Dr Priestley professes to consider *the evidence from Jerome, in favour of the existence of a church of orthodox Jewish Christians at Jerusalem, after the time of Adrian.** The learned reader will be pleased to recollect, that my proof of the existence of such a church rests in part only, upon St Jerome's evidence: the entire proof rests upon seven positions, laid down by me in my Remarks upon Dr Priestley's Second Letters, P. II. chap. ii; and St Jerome's evidence goes barely to the proof of the last of those positions, the seventh: namely, "that a body of orthodox Christians of the Hebrews, was actually existing in the world much later than in the time of Adrian:"† St Jerome's evidence is brought for the proof of this position singly; and this proved by St Jerome's evidence, in conjunction with six other principles previously laid down, in the proof of which St Jerome is not at all concerned, makes the whole evidence of the main fact which I affirm; that a church of orthodox Christians of the Hebrews existed at Ælia, from the final dispersion of the Jews by Adrian, to a much later period.‡

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* See the title of the fourth Letter. Third Letters, p. 25.

† Remarks on Dr Priestley's Second Letters, P. II. c. ii. sec. 7.

‡ Ibid. c. ii.

Dr Priestley tells me, that "before I can show that the passage in Jerome, on which I lay so great a stress, is at all to my purpose, I must prove the three following things: first, that the Hebrews believing in Christ were different from the Nazarenes; secondly, that the former were completely orthodox; and thirdly, that those orthodox Jewish Christians resided at Jerusalem."*

Certainly, it must be an argument of little significance, that cannot be applied to the matter in question, till the thing to be proved by it hath been previously proved from other principles: Dr Priestley hath confessed, that he sometimes condescends to amuse himself with the fabrication of such arguments;† but I would not willingly be detected in the use of them: I contend, that the passage in St Jerome's commentary on Isaiah, to which I refer in my Remarks on Dr Priestley's Second Letters, (Part II. chap. ii. sec. 8.) which Dr Priestley hath given at length, in the fourth of his Third Letters;‡ I contend, that this passage itself contains a clear proof, that the persons there mentioned under the description of "Hebrews believing in Christ," and under the name of "Nazarenes," were different persons: I contend, that this same passage affords a strong presumptive argument, that the former were completely orthodox. The existence of these Hebrew believers in the time of St Jerome, being thus proved by St Jerome's evidence; the probability of the fact that they resided at Ælia, and that such a body had been settled at Ælia from the time of Adrian downwards, rests upon my six former positions.

St Jerome relates, as I have observed, (Remarks,

* Third Letters, p. 28.

† First Letters, p. 130; and see my Letters in Reply, Letter ninth.

‡ Third Letters, p. 28.

Part II. chap. ii. sec. 8.) two different expositions of the prophecy delivered by Isaiah in the beginning of the ninth chapter, concerning Zabulun and Naphtali: the first of these expositions he ascribes to "the Hebrews believing in Christ," the other to "the Nazarenes, *whose opinion he had given above.*" Dr Priestley thinks, that by these Nazarenes St Jerome "did not intend any other, than the Hebrews believing in Christ, but only meant to vary his mode of expression:"* This might seem probable, if the difference of name were the only note of difference between the people; and if the Nazarenes had not been mentioned before by their proper name, and a particular opinion mentioned, as peculiar to the person so named; but to suppose, that under all these circumstances, St Jerome hath described the same people under different names, merely for the sake of varying his mode of expression, is to suppose, that he hath varied his expression when it ought least of all to have been varied, and when a variation could serve no purpose but to create confusion: an imputation to which St Jerome is too good a writer to be liable. The Nazarenes are twice mentioned by St Jerome under their proper name, in his commentary on the next preceding chapter of Isaiah's prophecies: the eighth. Upon the passage—*in lapidem autem offensionis et petram scandali duabus domibus Israel.*—St Jerome remarks, that "the Nazarenes who so receive Christ, that they discard not the rites of the ancient law, interpret these two houses of the two schools of Sammai and Hillel, from which sprang the Scribes and Pharisees,—and that these are the two houses that

* Third Letters, p. 29.

received not the Saviour," &c. Again, upon the passage at the conclusion of the same chapter,—*cum dixerint ad vos quærite a Pythonibus*,—he remarks, that the Nazarenes expound this passage also to the disadvantage of the Scribes and Pharisees. The persons whom he mentions under the same name in his commentary upon the ninth chapter, put, as he affirms, a similar sense upon the first verses of that: expounding the darkness and shadow of death, which overspread the land of Zabulon and Naphtali, of the load of Pharisaical ceremonies, from which they were delivered by the gospel: certainly, these persons mentioned by the same name, as expounding passages so near to each other, in the 8th and 9th chapters of Isaiah, so much to the same purpose, were the same persons; and when St Jerome in his commentary on the ninth chapter mentions "the Nazarenes, *whose opinion he had given above*," he refers to that opinion of the Nazarenes, which he had actually related just above in his commentary on the eighth chapter. But "the Hebrews believing in Christ," gave, according to St Jerome, an exposition of this prophecy concerning the land of Zabulun and Naphtali, very different from that which is ascribed by him to the Nazarenes: they imagined that the prophet, in the miseries which he describes of those northern provinces, alluded to the miseries of the captivity, which they were the first to undergo; as in compensation, they were the first who enjoyed the light of our Lord's own preaching. What similitude can Dr Priestley find between these two expositions? What connexion between the miseries of the captivity, and the load of Pharisaical ceremonies? To say as Dr Priestley says, that the Nazaræan exposition,

was only "a farther illustration"* of this of the Hebrew Christians, is as if any one should say, that Dr Priestley's exposition of the beginning of St John's gospel, is only an illustration of mine.

Here then, two different expositions of one and the same prophetick text, are ascribed to expositors described under two different names: the necessary inference is, that these expositors, differing in their names and in their sentiments, were different persons; or, to speak more accurately, since they are names of bodies by which they are severally described, two different sects: This is St Jerome's evidence, that the Hebrews believing in Christ, were different people from the Nazarenes.

Dr Priestley thinks it a presumptive argument, that these Hebrew Christians were the same with the Nazarenes, and indeed with the Ebionites; that St Jerome introduces their interpretation of the prophecy, "after giving a translation of the passage by Aquila and Symmachus, both Ebionites."† Due regard being paid to this circumstance, Dr Priestley thinks this passage of St Jerome, "furnishes an argument that, in the idea of Jerome," these Hebrews "were the very same people" with the Nazarenes; "if it does not also prove, that their opinions were the same with those of Aquila and Symmachus, or of the Ebionites."‡

The fact however is, that these Hebrew Christians, as it should seem from their exposition of the prophecy, in this passage at least, followed not the translation either of Aquila or Symmachus, so far as we know what their translations of this passage were, from the in-

* Third Letters, p. 29. † Ibid. ‡ Ibid.

formation which St Jerome hath given: the Hebrew Christians took the word נצר to be the proper name of the region of Galilee; whereas both Aquila and Symmachus, as St Jerome tells us, took it for an appellative; and this circumstance, their different interpretations of that single word, with Symmachus's interpretation of another single word in the first verse, is all that St Jerome hath "given" us, of the translations of this passage by Aquila and Symmachus; though Dr Priestley hath thought proper to speak as if St Jerome, in his commentary, had given their entire translations of the prophecy, and would lead his readers to believe, that the exposition of the Hebrew Christians, was founded on those translations.

The probable argument, that the Hebrew Christians were orthodox, is this: that the character given of them by an orthodox writer is simply this, "that they believed in Christ," without any thing to distinguish their belief from the common belief of the church, without any note of its error or imperfection. This argument acquires great weight from the well known temper of St Jerome and his times.*

Dr Priestley thinks it "remarkable, that having before maintained, that those whom Jerome called Christians in his epistle to Austin, were orthodox, I should now allow, that by the same term he here means hereticks; and that the phrase *believing in Christ*, should now be a character of complete orthodoxy, when in that epistle it is predicated of the heretical Ebionites:"† I never maintained, that the Nazarenes mentioned by St

* Remarks on Dr Priestley's Second Letters, P. II. chap. ii. sec. 8.
† Third Letters p. 26.

Jerome in his epistle to St Austin, were orthodox Christians—I maintained the contrary :* I only maintain, that, upon the particular article of our Lord's divinity, they were certainly orthodox; and so far as we know, in most other articles of their creed: but, by their bigotted attachment to the law, they were hereticks. I have given my reasons † why I think the Nazarenes mentioned here, a different set of people from the Nazarenes mentioned in the epistle to St Austin; and still less, if at all, heretical: of the Ebionites, the belief in Christ is not predicated in that epistle simply, as here of the Hebrews, without any thing to distinguish their belief from the common belief of the church—without any note of its error or imperfection :—St Jerome, when he speaks of the belief of the Ebionites, marks and reprobates their misbelief in the distinctest and severest terms. At this day, the word *believer*, in its common acceptation, signifies a sound Christian: but, with certain additions to qualify and restrain its meaning, I, uncharitable and intolerant as I am, might apply it even to Dr Priestley: but it would hardly be understood, that by such an application of it, I could mean to allow that Dr Priestley is a believer in the full sense of the word—it would certainly be in very different senses, that I should apply this same word to Dr Priestley, and to the Dean of Canterbury, Professor White, or Mr Parkhurst.

If there be any thing in Dr Priestley's Letters which I receive with particular complacency, it is the kind concern which he sometimes discovers, lest, in my heedless zeal to oppose his opinions, I should suffer my own foot

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* Charge I. sec. 12.

† Remarks on Dr Priestley's Second Letters, P. II. chap. ii. sec. 1.

to slip from the straight line of orthodoxy: in reply to my reasoning, for the orthodoxy of one branch at least of the Nazarenes, from the exposition ascribed to them by St Jerome of Isaiah viii. 13, 14,* by which it clearly appears, that they thought the Saviour of the world designed in that passage by the title of יהוה צבאות, he tells me, that "he wonders that this mode of interpreting Scripture, should not stagger even myself: *He* thought, that the most orthodox of the present day had believed, that the person characterized by the title of the Lord of hosts, had been, not the Son but the Father."† So he may have thought: that he hath so thought, only proves, that he is as little acquainted with the orthodoxy of the present, as of past days: the orthodox of the present day well know, that the Son no less than the Father, is often characterized in the Old Testament by the word Jehovah, put absolutely: they hold it one irrefragable argument of the Son's divinity, that the writers of the New Testament usually mention Christ, by the title of Κυριος, "the Lord;" which is the word that, throughout the Old Testament, in the Greek version of the LXX, is used as equivalent to the Hebrew Jehovah. Him whom the apostles and evangelists called Κυριος, writing in the Greek, they must have called יהוה (Jehovah) had they written in the Hebrew language—the orthodox of the present day believe, because they know St John believed it, that Christ Jesus is the JEHOVAH, whom the prophet saw upon the throne the year that King Uzziah died, whose praises were the theme of the Seraphick Song, whose glory filled the temple.

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* Remarks on Dr Priestley's Second Letters, P. II. chap. iii. sec. 7.

† Third Letters, p. 34.

The disturbed foundations of the church of Ælia, are again settled: I could wish to trust them to their own solidity, to withstand any future attacks. I could wish to take my final leave of this unpleasing task, of hunting an uninformed, uncandid adversary, through the mazes of his blunders and the subterfuges of his sophistry. But I have found, by the experience of this conflict, that a person once engaging in controversy, is not entirely at liberty to choose for himself to what length he will carry the dispute, and when he will desist: I perceive that I was guilty of an indiscretion, in discovering an early aversion to the continuance of the contest: my adversary perhaps, would have been less hardy in assertion, and more circumspect in argument, had I not given him reason to expect, that every assertion would pass uncontradicted, and every argument uncanvassed: unambitious therefore as I still remain, of the honour of the last word, be it however understood, that if Dr Priestley should think proper to make any further defence, or any new attack, I am not pledged either to reply or to be silent.

APPENDIX.

BISHOP HORSLEY has declared, that in publishing the preceding Tracts, his object was not to bring forward any new argument in support of the divinity of our Blessed Lord, or of the Catholick doctrine of the Trinity; but to destroy the credit of an author by whom these doctrines had been attacked, by showing, that as an ecclesiastical historian and Greek scholar, he had no claim to such deference as had been generally paid to him, in the character of a chemical philosopher. That the Bishop has incidentally added strength to the arguments, by which others had defended the Catholick doctrine, against the insults of infidelity and the sophistry of Unitarianism; has been gratefully acknowledged indeed, by every lover of the truth as it is in Jesus; but his *main object* was to show, that a man may have made valuable discoveries in physical science, without being entitled to implicit belief, when professing to have made discoveries likewise in Christian theology.

To a superficial thinker this may appear an object, unworthy of the talents and erudition which the Bishop is universally allowed to have possessed; but he who reflects, how large a proportion of mankind are *implicit* believers, whether in the truth or in error, will view it

in a different light. We talk much of the right of private judgment,—and we talk well; for every man has an unquestionable right to judge for himself, of the truth or falsehood of what is proposed to his belief: But with respect to the questions discussed in this volume, the only judgment which the illiterate multitude can form, is, whose *report* is best entitled to be implicitly adopted by them as the truth: their education does not enable them, by consulting the records of Christian antiquity, to discover for themselves what was the faith of the primitive church: they *must* rely therefore, with unbounded confidence, on the testimony of such as, having consulted those records, make their report of that faith; and they will always place, as they ought to place, the greatest confidence in those who appear to them best entitled to it, by their reputation for learning, integrity, and the love of truth.

Dr Priestley's natural talents were unquestionable; his successful experiments had raised him high in the republick of letters, or rather of philosophy; by those who were attached to him, he was extolled for his kindness and benevolence; and he took care on all occasions to boast, that as his theological opinions led neither to honour nor to emolument, he was induced to publish them, solely by his love of truth. That the mere name of such a man must have decided the faith of many, cannot be doubted. The vulgar know not, that the love of novelty, and the ambition of becoming the founder of a sect, which sometimes steals insensibly even into the most vigorous and upright minds, are as apt to pervert the judgment, as the love of money or the ambition of rank: nor is it among the vulgar only, that the authority of names supplies too often, the place of argu-

ment: Philosophers themselves are all more or less, partial to their own pursuits and their own theories; and the chemist who is desirous to know, what was the faith of the earliest Christians, and who has not leisure to read the voluminous writings of the fathers of the church, having found that Dr Priestley's reports of his own experiments on air are entitled to the fullest credit, even when his inferences from those experiments have been untenable and absurd, not unnaturally concludes, that the same confidence may be placed in his reports of the doctrine of the early church.

Such being the case, it is of the utmost importance to the diffusion of truth, that the authority of celebrated names be duly appreciated; and Bishop Horsley could not have employed his time or his talents to better purpose, than in bringing down the name of Dr Priestley to its proper level. Since the first publication of the Tracts, which are now offered a third time to the church of Christ, no man until very lately has presumed to boast, of the weight of *Dr Priestley's name* in theological controversy; and thus has one bias been removed from the youthful mind, when entering on the investigation of Catholick truth.

Of all this, Mr Belsham appears to be fully aware; and therefore, in the appendix to the twelfth section of his late work entiled, *A Calm Inquiry into the Scripture Doctrine concerning the Person of Christ*, he sets himself in good earnest to destroy the authority of Bishop Horsley's name, as his Lordship had destroyed the authority of Dr Priestley's. He probably thinks, that as one of those names sinks the other will rise, and that, when the equipoise between the two shall be restored, the *weight of his own name* thrown into the scale

of Dr Priestley's, will instantly make the Bishop's kick the beam: with this view he lays hold of one or two passages, certainly not of the greatest importance to the question at issue, between the Catholicks and the Unitarians, but where he may most easily employ all the arts of modern controversy; and when, by partial quotations and contemptuous language, he imagines that he has thrown a sufficient quantity of dust into the eyes of his readers, he claims to himself, what he will not allow to his Redeemer, the divine attribute of searching the heart, and declares, "that both the contending parties retired from the field *well satisfied* with the result of the conflict,—Dr Priestley with his VICTORY, and Dr Horsley with his MITRE."

Affecting, after his master in theology, a great reverence for the character of Origen; he begins his attack of Bishop Horsley, with accusing him of defaming, either ignorantly or wilfully, that learned presbyter of the ancient church, for the purpose of falsifying history respecting the faith of the Hebrew Christians.

"Dr Priestley," he says, "having asserted upon the authority of Origen, that the Jews who believed in Jesus were called Ebionites; that these Ebionites were of two sorts, one of them believing the miraculous conception, the other not, but all of them considering Christ as a mere man;* Dr Horsley in reply, after endeavouring to show that Origen's words might be interpreted differently, proceeds in a very triumphant tone to remark, "Let his words be taken as you understand them; *and so far as the faith of the Hebrew Christians of his own time is in question, let him appear as an evi-*

* Belsham, p. 422.

dence on your side. I shall take what you may think a bold step; I shall tax the veracity of your witness—of this Origen."

This is part of a quotation from the seventh of Dr Horsley's Letters to Dr Priestley; but the clause which is here printed in the Italick character, Mr Belsham has *prudently* omitted: the quotation proceeds to the end of the fifth section of that letter; to the whole of which the reader is requested to pay particular attention: if he comply with this request, he will find, that in the four first sections, Dr Horsley has not only *endeavoured to show* that Origen's words might be differently interpreted, but *actually proved* that they will *not admit* of the sense, in which Dr Priestley has chosen to interpret them: convinced however of the goodness of his own cause, and knowing how little Origen is to be relied on when writing controversy, Dr Horsley made a concession to which he could not have been driven, and which he probably would not have made, could he have foreseen the unfair advantage of it that was to be taken by his adversaries. To deprive Mr Belsham of that advantage, in which he vain-gloriously affects to triumph, it is proper to inform the reader, that in the quotation which he has made from the Bishop's letter, there is another *prudent omission* of no fewer than *three sentences*, which all affect the question at issue, of Origen's veracity.

The object of the Bishop was, to tax the veracity of Origen in what he says *only of the faith of the Hebrew Christians of his own time;* but the object of Mr Belsham seems to be, to charge the Bishop with taxing the veracity of Origen *on every question:* he is probably aware, that Origen being strongly attached to the phi-

losophy of his age, which led her votaries to contend in controversy for victory rather than for truth, might readily be believed to have asserted a falsehood, in answer to the invective which his antagonist had put into the mouth of a Jew ; but he is aware at the same time, that the character of Origen stands so high in the learned world, that he who should charge him with disregard to *truth in general*, would excite against himself the indignation of every man of letters. Whether all this occurred to Mr Belsham's mind, and induced him to omit the sentences to which I allude, is unknown to me, who possess not the faculty of discerning the secrets of other men's hearts; but he could not have acted otherwise than he has done, if it *had* occurred to him *and influenced his conduct.*

If the reader has turned to the fifth section of the Bishop's seventh Letter to Dr Priestley, he has found him modestly saying, "All this I affirm with the less hesitation, being *supported* by the authority of Mosheim; from whom indeed *I first learned*, to rate the testimony of Origen *in this particular question* at its true value."

This sentence Mr Belsham has *not* omitted; but he draws from it an inference which, by all the arts of controversy, it cannot be made to support. "One would conclude," says he, "from the manner in which Dr Horsley appeals to the testimony of Mosheim, that, having first from his own extensive researches into ecclesiastical history, made this notable discovery of a Jewish church at Ælia, he was confirmed in his judgment by finding, that Mosheim had also made the same discovery : *but the truth is*, that the learned dignitary, *placing implicit confidence* in Mosheim's testimony, having borrowed all the circumstances related by that celebrated

historian, and mixed up a little of his own, has stated with great parade and as an incontrovertible fact, a narrative most improbable in itself, and utterly destitute of foundation in ecclesiastical antiquity."*

I have been told by a learned friend of mine, much conversant in works on the laws of reasoning, that Mr Belsham published some years ago *a Compendium of Logick*, remarkable for such definitions as the world had never before seen. It must be by the aid of *such* definitions, that one would *artificially* conclude from the manner in which Bishop Horsley appeals to the testimony of Mosheim, that he had first by his own researches discovered a church of Jewish Christians at Ælia, and was afterwards confirmed in his judgment by finding that Mosheim had made the same discovery before him; for by the laws of such logick as is known in the Schools, a conclusion directly contrary to this must *naturally* be made from the Bishop's words. He says expressly, "that it was from Mosheim *that he first learned* to rate the testimony of Origen *in this particular question* at its true value;" and though he was a greater master than most men, both of the Aristotelian and of the Baconian logick, I am persuaded that he could not have conceived it possible, to draw from his own words such a conclusion as Mr Belsham has drawn from them.

With respect to what the same original logician here calls *the truth*, I can only say, that it was not Bishop Horsley's practice to put *implicit confidence* in any uninspired testimony; but I cannot affirm as an *unquestionable truth*, that on this occasion he did not deviate

* Belsham, p. 426.

from his usual practice. What that practice was, no man not possessing the faculty of discerning the secrets of his neighbour's heart, could have better opportunities of knowing than I enjoyed; and although I may not have derived from them all the advantages which I might and ought to have done, yet I was sufficiently attentive to the Bishop's mode of investigating the truth, to be able to say, that it was exactly what to ordinary readers his words declare it to have been on this particular occasion. When he found any thing of importance asserted by a modern writer on ancient authority, far from placing implicit confidence in the modern *testimony*, he did not rely even on modern *criticism;* nor had he ever recourse to an English or French translation of a Greek or Latin author of antiquity, as is the common practice of the most arrogant polemicks of the Unitarian school: It was Bishop Horsley's practice, to consult the authorities referred to, with his own eyes; and to draw from them, whatever conclusion his own reason and critical sagacity enabled him to draw; though, not deeming himself infallible, he was happy, as every man not lost to all sense of modesty would be, to have his own judgment *supported* by the concurrence of a scholar so eminent as Mosheim.

But, says Mr Belsham, "the learned dignitary, placing implicit confidence in Mosheim, borrowed all the circumstances related by that celebrated historian, and *mixed up* (with them) *a little of his own.*" At the distance of two pages indeed, the same Mr Belsham, after representing a *very common book* as not easily to be met with in England, affirms, that the Bishop had in fact advanced *nothing* but what he had borrowed from Mosheim: both these assertions cannot be true; whether

either of them be entitled to the fullest credit, the reader will judge for himself, when he has read with attention the first and second chapters of the second part, of the Bishop's Remarks on Dr Priestley's Second Letters to the Archdeacon of St Alban's, and compared them with the following extract from Mosheim's work.

"Quum HADRIANUS Hierosolymam ex cineribus suis paullatim renascentem denuo funditus evertisset, severasque in Judaicam gentem leges tulisset, maxima Christianorum in Palæstina degentium pars a lege MOSIS, cui antea paruerat, descisebat, atque antistitem sibi MARCUM creabat, non Judæum, sed alienigenam, quo nihil sibi cum Judæis commune esse doceret. Quod factum indigne ferentes illi, qui Mosaicæ legis immoderato studio ducebantur, secedebant a fratribus, atque in illa Palæstinæ parte quæ Peræa dicebatur, vicinisque locis peculiarem cœtum condebant, in quo cæremoniis a MOSE præscriptis vetus sua diguitas incolumis manebat. Familia hæc, exigua sine dubio, claritatem nunquam adepta est, quumque per aliquot sæcula in Palæstina vixisset, post CONSTANTINUM M. paullatim esse desiit."

To this passage, which is part of the text of his work entitled *De Rebus Christianorum ante Constantinum Magnum Commentarii*, Mosheim subjoins the following important note.

"Eximius est hac de re SULPITII SEVERI locus Histor sacr. Lib. II. cap. xxxi. p. 245. *Et quia Christiani* (in Palæstina viventes) *ex Judæis potissimum putabantur* (*namque tum Hierosolymæ non nisi ex circumcisione habebat ecclesia sacerdotem*) *militum cohortem custodias in perpetuum agitare jussit, quæ Judæos omnes Hierosolymæ aditu arceret. Quod quidem Christianæ fidei*

proficiebat; quia tum pœne omnes Christum Deum sub legis observatione credebant. Nimirum id Domino ordinante dispositum, ut legis servitus a libertate fidei atque ecclesiæ tolleretur. Ita tum primum Marcus ex gentibus apud Hierosolymam episcopus fuit."

This is the passage which furnishes the basis of Bishop Horsley's reasoning, in that part of the preceding Tracts to which we have immediately referred; and it is on the same passage, that Mosheim makes the following observations.

"Etsi nec lucis, nec ordinis satis habet hic SULPITII locus, clare tamen origines ostendit illius inter Christianos ecclesiæ, quæ Christum ita sibi colendum esse censuit, ut MOSIS tamen legibus simul obtemperaret. Constat enim (I) ex eo Christianos in Palæstina viventes Judaici generis, quamdiu spes erat, fore, ut Hierosolyma post primum excidium instauraretur, ritus a MOSE imperatos cum CHRISTI cultu conjunxisse. (II) Repudiasse maximam partem horum Christianorum legem Mosaicam sub HADRIANO quum spes omnis, fore, ut Hierosolyma resurgeret, occidisset, atque MARCUM, alienigenam, episcopum elegisse. Hoc ideo sine dubio fiebat, ne forte episcopus gente Hebræus, innato patriæ legis amore ductus, abrogatas cæremonias paulatim reduceret. (III) Causam sublatæ hos inter Christianos legis Mosaicæ fuisse HADRIANI, Imperatoris severitatem, qui milite cingebat spatium, quod urbs Hierosolyma quondam occupaverat, omnesque Judæos ab ejus aditu cohiberi jubebat. In hac re explicanda minus est, quam decebat, perspicuus et luculentus SULPITIUS, multaque retinet animo, quæ rectius enuntiasset. At liquet tamen in universum, quid sibi velit, nec difficile est addere, quæ omissa sunt ab eo. Christiani Palæstinæ quamdiu legi

Mosaicæ serviebant, a Romanis pro Judæis habebantur: nec temere prorsus. Hadrianus igitur quum Judæis aditum ad loca, quæ Hierosolyma quondam occupaverat, occlusisset, Christianis pariter non licebat ad illud spatium accedere. Atqui Christiani hi facultatem sibi dari cum maxime cupiebant Hierosolymam proficiscendi, quum vellent, ea ergo ut potirentur, cæremonias legis Mosaicæ dimittebant, atque, ne Romani dubitarent, serione hoc fecissent, an simulatæ, gubernationem cœtus sui non Judæo, sed alieugenæ, committebant. Post hoc apertum cum lege Judæorum divortium, patiebantur eos Romani regionem illam ingredi, a cujus aditu milites Judæos arcere jussi erant. Hæc omnia ex Sulpitio, valde licet negligenter scribat, mediocri attentione adhibita eliciuntur."

Mosheim then inquires into what was probably the motive, which induced the greater part of the Jewish Christians to cherish so strong a desire to return to Jerusalem, as, for the attainment of that object, to abandon the laws and rites of their fathers: after stating several possible motives, and rejecting them all as in the highest degree improbable, he says,

"Alia ergo sine dubio his Christianis ratio fuit, cur facultatem Hierosolymam adeundi majorem patriis suis cæremoniis et institutis esse, putarent, atque illam legis Mosaicæ contentione redimere non dubitarent. Neque magno, ut opinor, labore opus erat ad eam investigandam. Construxerat Hadrianus non longe ab illo loco, quo steterat Hierosolyma, novam urbem, cui *Ælicæ Capitolinæ* nomen dederat, quamque magnis juribus donaverat. Huic novæ coloniæ adscribi valde cupiebant Christiani, qui partim Pellæ, exiguo oppido, partim in agris, parum commode et liberaliter vivebant. Ex-

cluserat vero Imperator a nova urbe sua gentem Judaicam; cujus portio quum Christiani esse viderentur, qui legi Mosaicæ obediebant, ad eos quoque lex HADRIANI de Judæis non in civitatem recipiendis pertinebat. Quocirca maxima eorum pars, quo jus civitatis Æliæ consequi, domiciliumque suum Pella Æliam transferre libere posset, cæremoniarum legem a MOSE præscriptam abrogabat. Auctor hujus consilii, quod in primis verisimile est, is ipse MARCUS erat, quem episcopum sibi præficiebant, homo, quod nomen docet, Romanus et sine dubio Romanis in Palæstina dominantibus non ignotus, forte principem quemdam inter Romanos virum cognatione attingens. Suæ igitur gentis hominem quum caput Christianorum præfecti Romanorum viderent, timere desinebant, ne quid novæ civitati periculi ex Christianis oriretur, neque amplius Judærum eos in numero habebant: ex quo consequebatur, ut facultas illis concederetur, in novam Imperatoris urbem migrandi et civium ejus juribus, quæ eximia erant, fruendi. Nihil est in his difficile creditu: omnia vero egregie ex eo, quod diserte scriptum legitur apud EPIPHANIUM *de ponderibus et mensuris* § XV. p. 171. confirmantur, Christianos, lege Judaica dimissa, Pella Hierosolymam migrasse. Hierosolymæ vero nomine nova HADRIANI urbs intelligi debet, quæ post CONSTANTINI M. ætatem verum nomen suum amittebat et Hierosolyma vocabatur. Vid. HENR. VALESIUS *Adnot. ad Eusebium*, p. 61. Quamquam si vel hoc memoriæ non esse proditum, omni tamen vacaret controversia. Certissimum enim est, Æliæ Christianorum ab HADRIANI jam ætate celebrem extitisse ecclesiam, atque episcopos, qui vulgo Hierosolymitani nominantur, Ælienses revera fuisse."

"Non addit SULPITIUS cujus locum illustramus, non omnes Christianos in Judæa viventes insignem hanc mutationem probasse, verum partem eorum legis Mosaicæ studium retinuisse, atque a societate eorum, qui legi nuntium miserant, recessisse. Sed nec opus erat, ut hoc adderet, quum in vulgus notum esset. Extitisse in Palæstina cœtum Christianorum legis cultum cum Christiana religione conjungentium, alium item cœtum Mosaicis cærimoniis nihil loci et honoris tribuentem, testatissimmum est. Divisio hæc Christianorum ex Judæis ortorum non contigit ante tempora HADRIANI; scimus enim, ante hunc omnes Christianos in Palæstina commorantes in servandis majorum cæremoniis concordes fuisse. Quocirca sine dubio discidium hoc tum extitit, quum, duce MARCO, sub HADRIANO plerique eorum jugum rituum abjicerent, quo securius vivere, atque inter cives novæ urbis, Æliæ Capitolinæ, recipi possent."

The reader who attentively compares this long extract, with those parts of the preceding Tracts to which I have already referred, as relating to the same subject; will perceive with what *justice* Mr Belsham charges Bishop Horsley, with the intention of passing off Mosheim's discoveries for his own, presuming upon security from detection by the scarcity of Mosheim's book; he will likewise perceive the *modesty* of Mr Belsham, when he affirms, that the Bishop was "nothing more than the humble, and we may charitably hope, the *ignorant* plagiary of the falsehood and defamation of another."* Bishop Horsley ignorant, and Mr Belsham learned!

The Bishop must have been ignorant indeed, if he

* Belsham, p. 427.

presumed on the *scarcity* of Mosheim's book entitled *De Rebus Christianorum ante Constantinum Magnum Commentarii;* for though I brought it not with me into Scotland, I found it in the libraries of the two first clergymen to whom I applied for the loan of it: but what detection had the Bishop to dread? He expressly declared, that Mosheim first pointed out to him the ground over which he afterwards travelled, and taught him to rate the veracity of Origen, on a particular question, at its true value. He boasts of no discoveries of his own, nor attempts to defraud Mosheim of his: he consulted the same ancient authors which had been consulted by Mosheim before him, and by Cave before Mosheim; and as a lover of truth, he could not pass them by without examination; but, though from the facts recorded by Sulpitius and Epiphanius, he draws most of the conclusions which had been drawn by his learned predecessors in this investigation, he does not infer from these facts, every thing which Mosheim had inferred from them; in a passage of that historian's long note, which I thought it not worth while to transcribe, he says that "without doubt Marc, the roman bishop of the church of Hebrew Christians at Ælia, demonstrated to those Christians, before they left Pella, that the ritual law of Moses was abolished by Christ:" this seems to have been said, I know not on what authority, with the view of vindicating the Hebrew Christians, from the charge that might otherwise be brought against them, of having abandoned the customs of their ancestors from mere worldly motives: Mosheim has not the smallest doubt, but that the arguments of Marc amounted to demonstration: "Minus vero (he adds) argumenta ejus valuissent apud homines a teneris legi Mosaicæ adsue-

tos, nisi desiderium accessisset ad ea Æliæ habitandi, civiumque ejus commoditatibus et juribus fruendi," &c. *

Bishop Horsley, though he professedly goes over the same ground, with the justly celebrated Chancellor of the university of Gottingen, does not with him, attribute the merit of weaning the affections of the Hebrew Christians from the ritual law of Moses, to this Bishop Marc, but to the writings of St Paul, and the decree of the apostolical college, which, as he justly observes, must have put every believer's conscience at ease on the subject. He admits however, that the desire of enjoying the benefits of the Ælian colony would have its effect: "I take it for granted (says he) that with good Christians, motives of worldly interest, which would not overcome conscience, would nevertheless overcome mere habit;"† and this he might surely take for granted in the present case, since the most important parts of the ritual law, to which the Christians at Pella were *habitually* attached, the severity and vigilance of Adrian, had rendered it impossible for them to observe: sacrifices could be offered only on the site of the Temple, of which Titus had ploughed up the very foundations; but the site of the temple was, by Adrian's command, surrounded by a cohort of soldiers; stationed there, for the very purpose of driving away every person who should approach it, with the view of offering sacrifice.

In confirmation of the inferences drawn from the narrative of Sulpitius Severus, Bishop Horsley appeals to the same passage in the writings of Epiphanius, to

* Mosh. De Reb Chris. Ant. Con. Mag. Com. § XXXVIII. p. 327.

† See Remarks upon Dr Priestley's Second Letters, Part. II. chap. ii.

which Mosheim had appealed before him; but he does what Mosheim did not do: He analyses that passage; vindicates it against the cavils of Dr Priestley; shows the full force of the evidence which Epiphanius, in conjunction with Sulpitius, affords, for the existence of a church of Hebrew Christians at Ælia; and the testimony of these two ancient authors he confirms, by the testimony of Orosius and of Jerome, to neither of whom Mosheim had made any appeal: he was not, therefore, a mere humble and ignorant plagiary of the German historian; but surely his inferences from the united testimony of three or four ancient authors, cannot be entitled to less regard, for their being nearly the same, which other men of such learning as Mosheim and Cave, had drawn before him.

The perversion of the sense of the Bishop's words in some parts of his disquisitions on this subject, by Mr Belsham, who represents him, as TAKING EVERY THING FOR GRANTED, because he occasionally makes use of that phrase, where there is no room for difference of opinion; is scandalous, because it must have been wilful. It can deceive no man however, who will take the trouble to have recourse to the Bishop's Tracts, in order to discover what he *really* took for granted; though the humble Unitarians, who place implicit confidence in Mr Belsham, may take it for granted, on his report, that the editor of the works of Newton, knew nothing of the laws of reasoning or of demonstration.

But, according to Mr Belsham, the reasonings and criticisms of Bishop Horsley can derive little support, from their coincidence with those of Mosheim: "this migration of the Hebrew Christians from Pella to Ælia, is stated, says he, by Mosheim in his Ante-Constantine

History; but upon *more mature reflection and better information*, it had been omitted in the General Ecclesiastical History, which alone Dr Priestley had consulted.*

This is an assertion, at least as precipitate as any that Dr Priestley himself ever hazarded. As I have not, in this remote corner, access to the *first edition* of what Mr Belsham calls the *General Ecclesiastical History*, I cannot say with confidence in what year it was first published; but I know from the testimony of Mosheim himself now lying before me, that the work entitled *De Rebus Christianorum ante Constantinum Magnum Commentarii*, which suggested to Bishop Horsley what he has said of the church at Ælia, was *first* published in the end of the year 1753; the preface and the dedication being both dated at Gottingen, on the 6th day of September in that year.

I know from the same testimony, that Mosheim employed *two years* on his *General Ecclesiastical History*;† and Dr Maclaine, the learned translator of that history, informs us‡ that the author died at Gottingen in the year 1755; the General history therefore, must have been *begun* the instant that the other work was published; so that there could not have been time for much *mature reflection*, or the acquisition of *better information* between the publication of the one work and the commencement of the other; even on the supposition, that the General History was first published *after* the other,—a fact of which I am very far from being certain.

It was indeed published many years after the *Insti-*

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* Belsham, p. 435. † See his Preface to that History. ‡ See his Preface.

tutiones Historiæ Christianæ Majores, and as that work is bound up in the same volume, with the edition of the *De Rebus Christianorum ante Constantinum Magnum Commentarii* now lying before me, I think it not improbable that Mr Belsham, with the usual heedlessness of his master, has looked at the date affixed to the first work in the volume, when he should have looked at the date of the second; and finding the former dated IV. Kalend. Octobr. 1739, hazarded the assertion that Mosheim, after *mature reflection* and *better information*, had omitted in his *General History* a detail which he had published in his Commentaries.

But has he omitted this detail in his larger history? No; he has given the detail as fully as was possible in such a work,* and refers, as he had done in his Commentaries, to Sulpitius and Episcopius as his authors; but he has omitted the critical disquisition on the words of Sulpitius, which in the Commentaries was published in a long note, too long to be inserted in a compendium of general history. He probably thought indeed, that there was no occasion for such a disquisition; for Dr Priestley had not then appeared; and before him, I am not aware that any writer of name, had called in question the existence of a church of orthodox Hebrew Christians at Jerusalem, though many were ignorant that what was called Jerusalem, was in fact Ælia.

I have already observed, that the Bishop vindicated the united testimony of Sulpitius and Epiphanius against the cavils of Dr Priestley: the cavils to which I more particularly alluded, refer chiefly to Epiphanius, and

* See Maclaine's translation of Mosheim's Eccles. Histor. Cent. II. Part I chap. I. § XI; and Part II. chap. V. § I. &c.

were founded in chronological difficulties; but they are revived by Mr Belsham, and brought into view in the following triumphant manner.

"The FACT is, and the Archdeacon does not deny it, that the desolation of Jerusalem of which Epiphanius speaks, was that by Titus, A. D. 70, MORE THAN SIXTY YEARS BEFORE THE COLONY OF ÆLIA EXISTED. 'But this, says the learned dignitary, is a matter of no importance: it is sufficient for my purpose, that these returned Christians were residing at Jerusalem or, more properly, at Ælia, at the same time that Aquila resided there as overseer of the Emperor's works.' So then, we are now to believe that these Hebrew Christians, who returned in great numbers to Ælia after Adrian's settlement of the Ælian colony, who abandoned the rites of Moses, and placed themselves under a Greek bishop (a Roman bishop), and worshipped in an unknown tongue,* that they might be qualified to partake of the valuable privileges of the Ælian colony, *were the very same persons* who had quitted Jerusalem to avoid the calamities of the siege by Titus, SIXTY YEARS before! Now if we allow, that at the time of their re-

* Why in an unknown tongue? Has Mr Belsham forgotten that Greek, Latin, and the dialect of Hebrew which was then vernacular, were all spoken by every man of learning, whether Jew or Roman, who had been for any time resident in Judea? During the trial (if trial it may be called) of our Saviour before Pilate, we never hear of the governor making use of an interpreter; and may not Marc, the bishop, have been as much master of Hebrew as Pilate the governor? Nay, may not the Hebrew Christians, from their long residence among the Gentiles at Pella, have acquired such a knowledge of the Greek tongue, as enabled them to read the whole New Testament in that language, in which by far the greater part of it was written, as well as to bear their part in the same language in the publick devotions of the church? I am unwilling to charge a man, probably much older than myself, with ignorance; but what Mr Belsham says of abandoning *the forms of publick worship*, to which the Hebrew Christians had been accustomed, would lead one to imagine that he is not aware, that in the primitive church every diocese had its own liturgy, the mere *forms* of which were liable to be altered by every Bishop in succession, according to his own taste and judgment.

treat, they were upon an average twenty years of age, they must have been fourscore at the time of their return: and it is really quite edifying, to figure to one's self these illustrious Octogenaries, '*our holy brethren the saints of the primitive church of Jerusalem,*' upon the first intelligence of the good news, hasting away from Pella and the North of Galilee, where they had been passing threescore years in obscurity and tranquillity, and in heroick defiance of the most inveterate attachments, and of the habits and prejudices of fourscore, abandoning at once the rites of their forefathers, and the *forms*, and even the *language*, of the devotions to which they had been ever accustomed, in order to obtain—what?—the valuable privileges and immunities of the Ælian colony! And how gratifying must it be to every pious mind to learn, upon the high authority of Epiphanius, that after all the fatigues and hazards of their journey, they were still in a flourishing state, teaching and working miracles with great effect, at the time when Aquila, who was converted by them, was superintendent of Adrian's works!"*

Whether Mr Belsham was restrained, by any prudential motive, from making these observations on the reasoning of Bishop Horsley, during that prelate's life, is probably known to Mr Belsham himself; but I will venture to assure him, that the Bishop, were he now alive and possessed of all his youthful ardour, would not deign to take the smallest notice of them: even I, however inferior to him, will not condescend to make a *serious* reply to such a tissue of petulance and absurdity: I think it but fair however to observe, that Mr Bel-

* Belsham, p. 435.

sham has not employed this mode of *reasoning*, so successfully as he might have employed it, in confirmation of his favourite doctrine of Unitarianism; and to convince him that I have a greater regard for the truth, than even for the memory of my ever-honoured father, I will here supply what he has so strangely omitted.

In the year 1682, the English Unitarians expressed a strong desire to convert the Mahometans to their creed of Christianity; and with that view presented an address on the subject, to the Ambassador of the Emperor of Morocco, who refused to receive it.* About the same period, the English Unitarians distributed *gratis* among the people, an immense number of pamphlets, printed on a publick stock, of which one object was to prove, that the Scriptures of the New Testament had been interpolated by the Trinitarians, to support their own doctrines.† When they were performing these notable exploits, the English Unitarians cannot on an average have been less than twenty years of age; and yet we find the *very same persons*, the English Unitarians, a full century afterwards doing the very same things,—publishing Unitarian pamphlets by subscription,‡ expressing the same earnest desire for the conversion of Mahomet,‖ and accusing the Catholicks of having wilfully interpolated the Greek Scriptures.§ True indeed it is, that they had so completely forgotten their address to "His Illustrious Excellency Ameth Ben Ameth, Ambassador of

* See Bishop Horsley's sixteenth letter to Dr Priestley.

† See Pref. to Leslie's Sos. Cont. Discussed.

‡ See Dr Priestley's Memoirs of himself.

‖ See Dr Priestley's History of the Corruptions of Christianity, and the first series of his Letters to Dr Horsley.

§ See the writings of the Unitarians in general, and of Mr Belsham in particular, since the commencement of the nineteenth century.

the Mighty Emperor of *Fez* and *Morocco*, to Charles the Second King of Great Britain," that in the year 1784, they denied that such an address had ever existed :* this however was not wonderful, in men a *hundred and twenty-two years old ;* for the memory is the faculty which generally decays first through age : but it is really quite edifying to see, with what condescension these aged Unitarians have adapted their style, to the varying tastes of the several generations that have passed away, since they addressed Ameth Ben Ameth ; and how gratifying must it be to every lover of the *truth* to learn, on the high authority of the *New Testament in an improved version, with a corrected text, and notes critical and explanatory*, that these Unitarians have retained all their other faculties in such perfection, as to be able, when no less than one hundred and thirty-eight years old, to perform what they ventured not to promise in their youth : They have now expunged from the Christian Scriptures the Trinitarian interpolations, and brought those Scriptures to teach that faith which, in their address to the Morocco Ambassador, they say God had raised up Mahomet to defend with the sword. If the Trinitarians be of opinion, that the preservation of their *holy brethren, the saints of the primitive church of Jerusalem*, in so flourishing a state as, at the age of eighty, to be able to teach with great effect, be any proof of the Catholick doctrine (and if this be not the opinion of the Trinitarians, it is not easy to conceive for what purpose a calculation was made by Mr Belsham of the age of their holy brethren), how much stronger is the proof of the Unitarian doctrine, from the preservation

* See the fifteenth of Dr Priestley's second series of Letters to Dr Horsley.

of the fellow-worshippers with the Ambassador of Morocco, in a state so flourishing as, at the more advanced age of ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-EIGHT, to be able to correct the ORACLES of GOD with great effect!

If the extract which I have made from Mr Belsham's *confutation* of Bishop Horsley, be of any importance in the Unitarian controversy, this addition which I have proposed to it, is of so much greater importance, that I really expect Mr Belsham's thanks for having suggested it: if its effect go to prove, that there could be no English Unitarians in the reign, both of Charles the Second and of George the Third; then has Mr Belsham succeeded in proving, that there could be no church of Hebrew Christians at Pella in the reign of Titus, and afterwards at Ælia in the reign of Adrian! Or should it be impossible, as I think it is, to deny that there were English Unitarians in the reign of Charles the Second, then, though it must be granted, that there were likewise Hebrew Christians at Ælia under a Roman bishop in the reign of Adrian, I have at least deprived the Trinitarians of the argument which they might draw for the truth of their doctrine, from the miraculous preservation of their orthodox Octogenaries, and have transferred that argument, in all its force, to the English Unitarians of the nineteenth century.

Of the remainder of Mr Belsham's arguments against Mosheim and the Bishop, I confess that I can make nothing: he goes over the same ground with Dr Priestley, from whom he occasionally differs; but these differences certainly add nothing to the force of the Doctor's original reasoning. He contrives however to weaken the Bishop's, by making him occasionally say what he has *not* said, and quoting *partially* what he *has* said;

and upon those implicit believers, the Unitarians, this will have as good an effect, as if he had raised the conjectures and arguments of Dr Priestley, to the height of demonstration: to such however, whether Trinitarians or Unitarians, as do not repose implicit confidence in Mr Belsham, I have only to recommend the old adage *audi alteram partem;* and if they pay attention to it, I am under no apprehension of injury to my father's fair fame from this rude attack, even in the judgment of candid Unitarians.

The man who can burlesque the Scriptures, for the purpose of turning into ridicule arguments which he does not fairly state, and cannot answer; is not, I hope, likely *long* to *retain* implicit credit, with serious Christians of any denomination.

"Whether the easy simplicity" he says, "of the Roman magistrates, was really imposed upon by the specious artifices of our 'holy brethren,'—or whether their good-nature, at the hazard of incurring the Emperor's displeasure, winked at the pious frauds,—or finally, since by the testimony of the Bishop's great authority, St Epiphanius, miracles had not yet ceased in the Jerusalem church, whether *their eyes might not be holden so that they did not know them,*—does not appear."*

To the admirers of the *improved version of the New Testament,* this may, for aught that I know to the contrary, appear genuine wit and sound reasoning, against the *possibility* of such a church of Hebrew Christians as the Bishop contends for, enjoying the privileges of the Ælian colony; but those who do not admire that version, will probably consider such a ludicrous application

* Belsham, p. 437.

of one of the proofs of Christ's resurrection, as a mere subterfuge,—nay, as a profane artifice, for withholding the reader's attention from arguments, which Mr Belsham is conscious that he could not have answered.

But, says Mr Belsham in the words of his master, "My Lord——the foundations of your church of Trinitarian Jews at Jerusalem (Ælia) after the time of Adrian, were attempted to be laid on the grossest calumny, and on the ruins of the fairest character that Christian history has to exhibit; and therefore they could expect no better fate, than to be overturned for ever."*

Foundations laid in this manner, certainly *deserve* no better fate than to be "overturned for ever;" but how comes Origen to be such a favourite with the present race of Unitarians, that his character should be deemed fairer than the character even of Christ Jesus? According to the creed of Dr Priestley and Mr Belsham, Jesus and Origen were both men, and nothing more than men; the characters of both are exhibited in Christian history; and here we are solemnly told, that the character of Origen is the fairest which that history has to exhibit! That Origen was a man of great talents and of most extensive erudition, is universally admitted; but that he asserted at one time the very reverse of what he had taught at another, and was, in controversy, more earnest to vanquish his antagonist than to maintain the truth, without being very scrupulous about the means by which the victory was to be gained; is known to all who know any thing of his writings: of all this, Bishop Horsley has given specimens from his works, and I shall add another from Dr Cave, because Cave was one of his most learn-

* Belsham, p. 459.

ed and ardent admirers, and has made, perhaps, the best apology possible for his tergiversation in controversy.

"Whilst Origen continued at Athens, (which was not long) he returned an answer to a letter which he had received from *Julius Africanus* concerning the history of Susanna, which *Africanus*, by short, but very forcible arguments,* maintained to be a fictitious and spurious relation: Origen undertook the case, and justified the story to be sincere and genuine, but by arguments, which rather manifest the acuteness of his parts than *the goodness of his cause*; and clearly show, how much men, of the greatest learning and abilities are put to it, when engaged to uphold a weak side, *which has no truth of its own to support it.*"†

The learned biographer attributes this disregard of truth in controversy, to Origen's delight in argument, which led him according to his apologist in Photius to write and say many things γυμνασίας χαίρων which, in his cooler and more considering moments, he would not have advanced; and this again he attributes to the natural ardour of his mind, impelling him to write on a variety of subjects *which he had not thoroughly studied*,‡ and to his attachment to the philosophy of his age, of which the very essence was the spirit of disputation. Of any thing more than this, Bishop Horsley has not accused Origen.—He has not insinuated, that he would not have been entitled to, at least, as much credit as either

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* The substance of these arguments, which are indeed unanswerable, may be seen in Cave's *Historia Literaria*, in the short biographical account of Julius Africanus.

† Cave's Lives of the Fathers, fourth edition, folio, p. 159.

‡ Was it for this conduct that Dr Priestley considered the character of Origen as the fairest that Christian history has to exhibit? It is conduct in which he himself certainly imitated the learned and ingenious presbyter of Alexandria.

Sulpitius, Epiphanius, or Jerome, had he, like them, been coolly writing history or criticisms on the Old Testament; but the Bishop has accused him, of misrepresenting facts through design or inattention, when writing controversy; and I am afraid that such an accusation, might be brought against zealous controvertists in every age.

Thus Dr Buchanan in his zeal, a laudable zeal certainly, to have Christian missionaries sent into our dominions in the East, has said in some of his late writings; that missionaries of all denominations, live in perfect harmony with each other in India, and know not those distinctions which are the sources of dissension among Christians in Europe. Nay, he says that even the distinctions between Papists and Protestants are, in the East, considered as sectarian; the only controversy there, being between the true God and an idol. Others again, who have come from India as well as he, who have had the same opportunities of making observations, and of whose zeal for religion there appears to be no room for doubt, give a very different account, of the light in which the various missionaries view one another in the East; and represent the preaching of unsent enthusiasts, as in the highest degree prejudicial to the propagation of genuine Christianity. Which of these accounts are we to believe? Probably neither of them to its full extent; for the authors of both, have each a favourite object in view, as Origen had in his controversy with Celsus; and these objects have got such complete possession of their respective minds, as to make them view, through different mediums the very same matters of fact, or overlook those facts entirely. That the distinction between Papists and Protestants is well known in the

East, and deemed of great importance, Dr Buchanan himself has furnished complete proof, in the account which he gives of the Syrian Christians ;* though, like Origen in his book against Celsus, he has expressed himself so very differently within the compass of one small volume.

Even Mr Belsham himself is not free from this weakness, to which controvertists of every description are indeed very liable: though I am as far from suspecting him of a disregard to truth in general, as my father was of suspecting Origen of such a disregard, it is impossible to doubt but, that in the heat of controversy he has, through inattention no doubt, asserted at least one falsehood as notorious as that of which the Bishop accused Origen—In his zeal to degrade the Son of God, from the dignity of the Creator to the rank of a mere man in the creation, he finds the epithet μονογενης, which is applied to him by St John, so much in his way, that to get rid of it, he supposes it to be employed by that apostle in no other sense, than as equivalent to ἀγαπητος, which he boldly affirms does *not occur in St John.* As he is one of the authors of the improved version, we cannot suspect him of having never read the original, or of having read it with so little attention, as to have totally overlooked any thing of importance which it contains; we can only suppose, that his mind was so completely occupied by the object of the controversy in which he was engaged with the celebrated Dr Clarke, as to make him lose sight at the instant, of at least six different sentences, in which St John employs the word αγαπητος in

* See his Christian Researches in Asia.

the sense in which it is commonly employed by other Greek writers.*

Having discussed the questions agitated by Mr Belsham, concerning the veracity of Origen, and the existence of a church of Jewish Christians at Ælia; the question respecting the æra of the epistle of Barnabas, the only thing remaining on which he has chosen to enter the lists with Bishop Horsley, will be easily disposed of.

Whoever has paid to the Bishop's Tracts that attention, to which the questions discussed in them have so powerful a claim from every Christian; must be aware, that the epistle of Barnabas was quoted, merely as evidence of the faith of the first Hebrew Christians; and until I met with Mr Belsham's book, I did not think it possible that any man could have insinuated, that the Bishop had attributed to that epistle any authority, to which even an apocryphal book, written with no obviously wicked intention, may not be justly entitled. Mr Belsham does not *directly* charge him with having attributed to it any undue authority; but the manner in which he labours to set aside its evidence, must lead the unthinking multitude who have never looked into the Bishop's Tracts, to imagine, that he considers it as the work of an inspired apostle.

"The venerable Archdeacon (says Mr Belsham) having pledged himself to prove, that the divinity of our Lord was the belief of the very first Christians, appeals

* See the British Critick for January 1812, to which I am indebted for pointing out to me this blunder, as Mosheim pointed out to my father the passages in Sulpitius and Epiphanius. I hope however, that even Mr Belsham will give me credit for having consulted my Greek Testament myself, though I admit, that it is at least as probable that I should have relied with implicit confidence on the British Critick, as that Bishop Horsley relied with implicit confidence on the Chancellor of the University of Gottingen.

in his eighth letter to a work of great antiquity, under the title of 'The Epistle of Barnabas,' which, though it is admitted not to have been written by the companion of St Paul, the learned writer contends to have been a production of the apostolick age, and addressed by a Hebrew Christian to his Jewish brethren; from this epistle he cites the following passage: 'The Lord submitted to suffer for our souls, although he be the Lord of the whole earth, unto whom he said the day before the world was finished, Let us make man after our image and our likeness.' He adds two or three other passages of the same import: he then remarks, that the writer mentions this doctrine as an article of their common faith; he brings no arguments to prove it; he mentions it as occason occurs, without showing any anxiety to inculcate it, or any apprehension that it would be denied or doubted, and he triumphantly concludes; 'This, Sir, is the proof which I had to produce: it is so direct and full, that if this be laid in one scale, and your whole mass of evidence, drawn from incidental and ambiguous allusions, in the other, the latter will fly up and kick the beam.' To this argument Dr Priestley replies in the second of his second series of Letters to Dr Horsley, by reminding his antagonist of the doubts entertained by many learned men (and by his antagonist among them) of the genuineness of this epistle, and of the certainty of the numerous interpolations, and those such as respect the very subject in question: adding, I must see other evidence than this from Barnabas, before I can admit, that the divinity or pre-existence of Christ, was the belief of the apostolick age."* This reply sufficiently impeaches the testimony of the pseudo-Barnabas.

* See Belsham, p. 440.

It does so, if by the word *impeaches* Mr Belsham mean *challenges*:* Dr Priestley might, in this sense, impeach any testimony whatever—even the testimony of the apostles, that they "had eaten and drunk with Jesus of Nazareth after he rose from the dead:" and Mr Belsham, if it seemed good to him, might have joined in that impeachment; but he would claim to himself and his master, a degree of deference which surely is not due to them, were he to expect even Unitarians to admit, on their bare *impeachment* unsupported by proof, that the apostles were false witnesses! Just so it is in the present case with respect to the testimony of Barnabas: he may, or may not be a false witness; but as the Bishop did not expect the publick to believe on his ἀνὴρ ἐφη that Barnabas bears testimony to the faith of the very first Christians in the divinity of our Lord, so neither will the publick believe Barnabas to be a false witness, on the impeachment of his veracity by Dr Priestley and Mr Belsham! It would be very unjust however to the memory of Dr Priestley, not to apprise my readers, that he expects from the publick no such implicit confidence, in what Mr Belsham calls his *impeachment* of the testimony of Barnabas: he assigns his reasons, not for *impeaching* that testimony (which he does not) but for contending, that it will by no means bear the *stress that his antagonist had laid upon it;* and to be satisfied whether those reasons have any validity, the reader has only to compare them with Dr Horsley's reply in this volume.†

Mr Belsham himself seems to have instantly discover-

* See Johnson's Dictionary under the word IMPEACH.

† See the eighth of Dr Horsley's Letters to Dr Priestley, the first of Dr Priestley's second series of Letters to Dr Horsley, and Part I. sect. 2, 3, of Dr Horsley's Remarks on Dr Priestley's Second Letters to the Archdeacon of St Alban's.

ed, that his mode of *impeaching* ancient testimonies is not alone sufficient to *destroy them;* he proceeds therefore to give an answer "*still more satisfactory*" he says, from the learned Jeremiah Jones, and begins with correcting some mistakes into which Dr Horsley had fallen, with respect to that gentleman's pedigree and private history. What this has to do with the question at issue about the deference due to the testimony of St Barnabas, or of the author assuming that name, I confess myself unable to imagine. We are next informed, that Mr Jones was the relation and pupil of the very learned Samuel Jones, who was also tutor to Dr Lardner, Maddox bishop of Worcester, Butler bishop of Durham, Secker archbishop of Canterbury, and Dr Samuel Chandler, "many years, the able and admired pastor of the highly respectable Presbyterian congregation of the Old Jewry."*

This is somewhat more to the purpose, as it shows that Jeremiah Jones had the best opportunity of being well educated: and I have not a doubt, but that he derived every advantage which could be derived, from the tutor of so many eminent men: still, the circumstance of Mr Jones having been well educated, does not tend in the smallest degree to destroy the evidence given in the epistle of Barnabas, that the divinity of our Lord was the belief of the first Christians: Secker, and Butler, and Maddox, and Chandler, were all convinced that the "divinity of our Lord was the belief of the very first Christians; and since they were all educated by the same tutor, and all possessed of eminent abilities, why should not we pay as much deference to their judgment as to the judgment of Jeremiah Jones? The

* Belsham, p. 441.

evidence possessed by us, of what was the belief of the first Christians will lose *something*, I do not think *much*, but it will lose *something* of its weight, if the testimony of Barnabas be set aside; and no orthodox Christian will allow it to be set aside without proof, by the *ipse dixit* of Mr Jones, merely because he was a man of learning, and the fellow pupil of three eminent English bishops, of one very learned Socinian, and of one eminent Presbyterian divine!

Mr Belsham seems to be aware of this, and therefore gives, in the following words, the answer supplied by the learned Jeremiah Jones, which he says is still more satisfactory, than the impeachment of the testimony of Barnabas by himself and Dr Priestley.

"In the second volume of his admirable treatise on the canon of Scripture, republished a few years ago by the University of Oxford, Part III. ch. 37, after a very full and impartial inquiry into the subject, Mr Jones states it as his *opinion*, which he substantiates by abundant evidence, that the epistle was written, not by Barnabas nor by any other Jew, but by some person who was originally a pagan idolater; that it is an apochryphal book, and was never read in the churches till the time of Jerome; that it contains many assertions which are absolutely false, and a great number of trifling, silly, and idle things: and upon the whole, he concludes from its having been cited only by *Clemens Alexandrinus and Origen*,* that it was forged at Alexandria; and because there are so many pious frauds in it, that it was

* That it was cited by other ancient writers besides Clemens and Origen, the reader may easily satisfy himself by perusing the *Veterum Testimonia de Epistola St Barnabæ*, prefixed to Cotelerius's edition of the apostolical fathers.

the forgery of some such person as corrupted the books of the Sybils, and that it was written about the middle of the second century."*

But all this is only the *opinion* of Mr Jones, and learned as I doubt not he was, I am not bound, nor is the publick bound to adopt his opinions without proof, in preference to the opinions of those who think differently of the epistle of Barnabas: that the epistle contains several trivial, silly, and idle things, and was not written by Barnabas the apostle, was the opinion of Bishop Horsley as well as of Mr Jones; and the Bishop assigns the reasons on which his opinion was founded: but that the epistle is the work of some apostolical writer, and no forgery of a converted heathen about the middle of the second century, is the joint opinion of Bishop Horsley and Dr Priestley:† now, throwing the Bishop's opinion out of the scale, whether is the opinion of the learned Jeremiah Jones, or of the learned Dr Joseph Priestley to preponderate on this occasion? If Mr Belsham think that two such names must keep the balance in equipoise, what is to happen when we throw into the Doctor's scale, the opinions of Archbishop Wake, Dr Cave, Cotelerius, and Bishop Pearson,‡ whose opinion alone is, on questions of this sort, of greater weight than the opinions of twenty Jones's and of as many Belshams, of greater weight indeed than the opinion of any other modern, with whose writings I am at all ac-

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* Belsham, p. 441.

† See the fifth section of Dr Priestley's *History of the Doctrine of Atonement*, in his *Appeal to the serious professors of Christianity*, and the eighth of Dr Horsley's Letters in the preceding Tracts.

‡ This prodigy of learning says, (Lect. II. in act. App. § 10.) Nemo certe fuit (veterum) qui hanc epistolam Barnabæ non tribuerit, neque in ea quidquam apparet, quod eam ætatem non ferat.

quainted. But they are not *modern* opinions only, that must be thrown into the scale of Bishop Horsley and Dr Priestley.

Origen himself, "the fairest character which Christian history has to exhibit," quotes this epistle, not barely as the writing of some apostolical men, but as the genuine writing of the apostle whose name it bears: in answer to an objection which Celsus puts into the mouth of his Jew, to the characters of those whom our Lord called to the apostleship, that they were *infamous wretches, publicans* and *fishermen*; Origen, after observing that Celsus seems willing enough to believe the writings of the evangelists, when they furnish matter for detraction, but not in matters of importance, least he should be obliged to confess the Divinity openly preached in their writings, adds—Γέγραπται δὴ ἐν τῇ Βαρνάβα Καθολικῇ Ἐπιστολῇ (ὅθεν ὁ Κέλσος λαβὼν τάχα εἶπεν, εἶναι ἐπιῤῥήτους, καὶ πονηροτάτους τοὺς ἀποστόλους) ὅτι ἐξελέξατο τοὺς ἰδίους ἀποστόλους Ἰησοῦς, ὄντας ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν ἀνομίαν ἀνομωτέρους. Καὶ ἐν τῳ εναγγελίῳ δε τῳ κατα Λουκᾶν φησι πρὸς τὸν Ἰησοῦν ὁ Πέτρος, Ἔξελθε ἀπ ἐμου, ὅτι ἀνηρ ἁμαρτωλὸς ειμι κύριε.*

That the epistle of Barnabas which is here cited by Origen, is the epistle which Messrs Jones and Belsham think unworthy of all credit, is unquestionable; for the very words quoted, are in the fifth chapter of that epistle published by Cotelerius: It is true Barnabas adds, that our Lord chose for his apostles the greatest of sinners, ἵνα δείξῃ, ὅτι οὐκ ἦλθε καλέσαι δικαίους, ἀλλὰ ἁμαρτωλους εἰς μετάνοιαν; and Origen, after citing several passages from St Luke and St Paul, acknowledging the apostles to have been great sinners, assigns a similar reason, for our Lord

* Vid. Orig. contra Celsum, lib. I. p. 49. ed. Cantab. 1658.

having made choice of such men to be the first preachers of his gospel.

Here then we have Origen bearing testimony, not barely to the antiquity of the epistle ascribed to Barnabas, but even to its genuineness as the work of that apostle himself; and quoting it as of equal authority, when relating a matter of fact, with the gospel of St Luke. In ascribing it to the apostle, I think indeed for the reasons assigned by Bishop Horsley, that Origen was mistaken; but into such a mistake, an inquirer into the records of the church so indefatigable as Origen, could not possibly have fallen, had the epistle been forged by a converted heathen in the very city in which he was born, and within thirty or forty years of his birth. At any rate Mr Belsham must admit, that if Origen was liable to fall into such a mistake as this, he is no competent witness respecting the church of orthodox Jewish Christians at Ælia during the reign of Adrian; for though he was more than once at Ælia or Jerusalem, he was not so long there as he was at Alexandria; nor had he equal opportunities of making himself acquainted with the original state of the Ælian church. Indeed, the epistle itself bears internal evidence little short of demonstration, that it could not have been composed by a converted pagan as Mr Jones alleges; for as Bishop Horsley observes, "none but a person bred in Judaism could, in that age, possess such a minute knowledge of the Jewish rites as is displayed in that book."

Here then we have a number of eminent men, Bishop Horsley, Dr Priestley, Archbishop Wake, Dr Cave, Cotelerius, and Bishop Pearson, himself a host, besides Origen "the fairest character that Christian history has to exhibit,"—all opposed to the learned Jeremiah Jones

and the learned Thomas Belsham; and if the question is to be decided by *authority* or by *votes*, the Catholick epistle of Barnabas must be deemed, a writing of the apostolical age.

"No," says Mr Belsham, it is not of the apostolical age, for Jeremiah Jones substantiates his opinion by abundant evidence;" but where is that evidence?—Mr Jones has indeed cited a great variety of testimonies—all, it is to be supposed that he thought of any weight, in deciding the authenticity of the epistle, and among these not one is found to favour Mr Jones's own opinion. Three out of the four ancient authorities produced by him, Clemens Alexandrinus, Origen, and Jerome, contend that the epistle is genuine—the work of the apostle whose name it bears—and the fourth, Eusebius, though he ranks it among the books which are spurious, believes it to have been written in the apostolick age: of the eighteen modern writers, whose sentiments upon the subject Mr Jones has detailed, *eight** agree in the opinions of Clemens Alexandrinus, Origen, and Jerome, and the remaining *ten*† in that of Eusebius: in the *conjecture* therefore, that the epistle of Barnabas was written "originally by a pagan, about the middle of the second century, and was the forgery of some such person as corrupted the books of the Sybils," Mr Jones stands *single*;‡ or at least, stood single till the appear-

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* J. Vosius. Dr Bernard. Du Pin. Dr Cave. Archbishop Wake. Dr S. Clarke. Mr Le Clerc. Dr Jenkin.

† Archbishop Usher. Hugo Menardus. Archbishop Laud. Cotelerius. Bishop Fell. Mr Dodwell. Mr Toland. Dr Mill. Mr Eachard. Mr Whiston.

‡ It must be confessed by every candid man who consults Mr Jones's work on the Canon of Scripture, that the author has displayed great ingenuity and considerable powers of reasoning in support of his conjecture; ("*for Mr Jones was really a learned man, and dealt not in contemptuous but argumentative lan-*

ance of Mr Belsham; and how unreasonable it would be, to suffer the opinion of a *single* writer, to decide the authority of any book in opposition to the general sense of the learned world, cannot be more forcibly illustrated than by applying, with a slight verbal alteration to Mr Jones's conjecture, the observations which he himself makes on the opinions of Clemens Alexandrinus.

"*Suppose then that one writer* (*Jeremiah Jones*) *had too low an opinion of a book, are we to be governed in determining its authenticity by the private opinion of one single writer, contrary to the known sentiments of every other writer? Must one man judge for the whole Christian world? And must his rejection of a book prove its insufficiency, when it appears to have been received by every Christian writer besides, and admitted on its own internal evidence, to have been the work of the apostolick age by every one who has mentioned it? I shall add no more here, but repeat what I observed* Vol. I. Prop. v. *that we are not to determine the authority of any book or books, upon the credit of any one or two particular writers, but the* WHOLE BODY OF THE WRITERS OF THE CHURCH."*

The reader is by this time satisfied, I trust, with what propriety Mr Belsham has applied to Bishop Horsley such epithets as *ignorant* and *pitiful!* Of this modern champion of Unitarianism I know nothing, but from his inquiry into the person of Christ, and his share, whatever it may be, in the merits of the improved ver-

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guage.") But if the reader will take the trouble to compare the arguments of Dr S. Clarke, Bishop Pearson, and Bishop Horsley, upon the point at issue, with the reasoning of Mr Jones, he will find the latter completely refuted.

* Jones's Can. of Scrip. Vol. II. Part III. cap. XL.

sion of the New Testament: but from these specimens of his literature and powers of reasoning, it seems not too much to say, that he is at least as inferior to Dr Priestley, as I readily acknowledge myself to be to Bishop Horsley: Dr Priestley, as the Bishop always declared, was, in the departments of physical science, to which he had devoted his attention, a great man, though he had no pretensions to superiority as a Greek scholar, or a Scripture critick: there may be departments in science, in which Mr Belsham too is great; but what they are I have not heard: I have therefore treated him without ceremony; though I trust that I have never expressed myself in language unworthy of a gentleman or a Christian.—If I acknowledge that I have sometimes felt it difficult to repress my indignation, and that I have treated with ridicule what, being unsupported by argument, admits not of an argumentative reply; I am persuaded, that by the candid part of the publick, I shall be forgiven; and the sentiments of Mr Belsham himself, will give me no concern. Τίς πονηρὸς καὶ τίνι τρόπῳ τί πολε πέπρηκται, μη μελοιμι; εἰδείην δε τὺς ἀγαθὺς καὶ τοῖς μεταδιώκοιμι. Οφειλοιμι μηδενὶ μηδεν· εἰδέ πολε ὑπ' ἀνάγκης μεγάλης ἐς τὸλο καλασταίην. γένοιτό μοι τάχιστα ἐλευθέρῳ γενέσθαι δυνηθῆναι. Αινεοιμι τὺς αγαθὺς ἀφθόνως. φιλοψογον δε γλῶσσαν παντὸς ἀποστυγείην.

FINIS.

ERRATA.

Page.	Line.	For.	Read.
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